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IN

TWELVE ERAS.

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THE

MIRROR OF HISTORY;

OR,

LIVES OF THE MEN OF GREAT ERAS,

FROM

JULIUS CÆSAR TO WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR.

BY

THE REV. EDWARD BUDGE, B.A.,
RECTOR OF BRATTON-CLOVELLY, DEVON.

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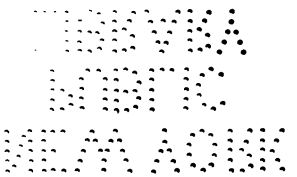

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MIRROR OF HISTORY.

ERA THE FIRST.

THE LIFE OF JULIUS CÆSAR.

THE RISE OF THE IMPERIAL POWER OF ROME, AND OF THE INVASION OF BRITAIN.

1. CAIUS JULIUS CÆSAR lived at a time remarkable for some of those great events which must always be deemed worthy of memory, in the history of states and empires. His age was famous for that military skill by which Rome was enabled to obtain its superiority over other nations, and to enlarge its conquests. Among its heroes whose actions are recorded with admiration, there was no one to whom he can be considered as inferior. His life and actions commence a new period in the history of that state over which he obtained the supreme rule, changing its constitution from a republic to that form of military despotism, which was continued till towards the latter end of the fifth century, when its glory was entirely extinguished.

2. The birth of this extraordinary man took place ninety-nine years before the Christian era, or 655 from the foundation of Rome (B.C. 753) by Romulus. His birthday was in that month of the year called by the Romans Quinctilis,—the same that has been since named

after him July, or in the Latin language Julius. Tradition traced his family to the line of Æneas, the hero of Virgil, whose son Iulus, or Julus, escaping with him from the flames of Troy, settled in Alba; and in the time of Tullus Hostilius migrated to Rome. From the time of the Punic war (B.C. 264), the ancestors of Cæsar had been distinguished by holding public offices. From his youth he was animated with a strong passion for glory, and his whole life was devoted to the object of obtaining it, and of thus acquiring a supremacy in the state. This dignity, he was destined at length to secure, by his great talents and military renown.

3. It was necessary for every Roman who aimed at distinction, to pass through the several stages of official rank which led to the consular dignity—the highest which the state then allowed. A view of the progress of Cæsar through these gradations, will afford an adequate idea of the steps by which every great man in that community obtained his promotion to the office of Consul. The first and lowest degree which Cæsar took in the path of promotion was that of a military or legionary tribune (B.C. 71); a post, however, which then gave its possessor less power than such officers enjoyed before the time of Sylla, who abridged it of some of those functions by which it had been accustomed to control the proceedings of the senators. His next advance was to become a Quæstor (B.C. 70), or collector of the public revenues. Through this he proceeded, at the end of five years, to take the office of an Ædile (B.C. 65), to whom belonged the care of the public buildings, and the management of the public spectacles, or games acted in the theatre. Not long after this time he secured his election to the dignity of Pontifex Maximus (B.C. 63), which was one held by the possessor for life. It placed under his directions, not only matters pertaining to the public bridges (as the original title imports), but, what was of far more consequence, it gave him the supreme charge of the temples of the gods, and the regulation of the ceremonials of the national religion. Another important step in advancement was the office of Prætor or prefect, who was the chief magistrate in the city of Rome (B.C. 62). This was necessarily followed after a year's service by that of proconsul, or an allotment of a province with a military command.

The last and highest in the order of these dignities, the consulship, Cæsar obtained not long after (B.C. 59), becoming thus invested with that power which, in the time of war, placed all the military regulations at his disposal.

4. To understand, however, this sketch of the progress of our hero with more advantage, it will be necessary to trace some of the actions of his life in detail. From this general summary of his career, to the time of his being consul, it will be seen that he did not commence the more striking part of his career at a very early age. His first appearance as an active statesman took place about the thirty-seventh year of his age (B.C. 63). But, thirteen years previously, he had served as a volunteer at the siege of Mitylene (B.C. 76), and had there obtained for himself the honour of a civic crown, which, though made only of oaken leaves, was esteemed the most reputable badge of martial virtue; and never bestowed, but for saving the life of a citizen, and killing at the same time an enemy.

5. In the earlier part of his life he had been exposed to great perils. When about seventeen years old, he was with some difficulty preserved from the resentment of Sylla. He had become allied to Marius, and had married Cornelia, Cinna's daughter, whom he could not be persuaded to divorce by all the threats of Sylla, who, considering him for that reason averse to his interests, deprived him of his wife's fortune, and of the office of high priest of Jupiter, to which he had been appointed the year previously (B.C. 83). Cæsar, therefore, apprehending something worse, thought it prudent to retire and conceal himself in the country. Here he was accidentally discovered by Sylla's soldiers, and was forced to redeem his head by a very large sum. This, and the intercession of the vestal virgins, to one of whom his wife was related, aided by the authority of other powerful relations, extorted, very unwillingly, a grant of his life from Sylla, who had the sagacity to foresee his future ascendancy in the state, declaring that he for whose safety they were so solicitous, would one day be the ruin of that aristocracy which he himself was then establishing with so much trouble, for he could discern many a Marius in this one Cæsar.

6. After the death of Sylla (B.C. 78), when he was now about the age of twenty-one, Cæsar returned to Rome,

leaving the court of Nicomedes in Bithynia, where he had remained longer than was consistent with his good fame. The caution and boldness of his character now began to be developed. He refused to become a partizan with Lepidus, knowing him to be too rash a leader of the city factions. But he hesitated not to bring an accusation in the Forum against Dolabella, a man of consular rank, and who had obtained a triumph. He charged him with corruption in his office while he held the province of Macedonia. Cæsar endeavoured to make good his cause, by the evidence of witnesses whom he had brought from Greece, and gained much reputation as an orator on this occasion. But his accusation failed, owing to the superior and more practised eloquence of Hortensius and Cotta, the advocates of Dolabella.

7. To escape the odium of this failure, the young orator resolved to take refuge at Rhodes, and especially because this place was the residence of Apollonius, then famous as a teacher of rhetoric. On his voyage he was captured by pirates, and remained a prisoner with them for five weeks, till the sum necessary for his ransom could be procured from the cities of Asia. The place of his detention was the Isle of Pharmacusa, now called Parmosa, opposite Miletus, or Malta. This captivity he bore with much vexation, his only attendants being a physician and two servants. When the pirates demanded twenty talents for his ransom, he laughingly told them they had not asked enough, and did not know who he was, promising to pay them fifty. All the time that he remained with them, he acted rather as their master than their captive, ordering them to keep silence whenever they disturbed his sleep, and calling them fools and barbarians at other times, when they showed no signs of admiration at his poems or speeches, which he read to them. But he joined in their sports with readiness—only threatening them, when they became too familiar, that he should crucify them. The barbarians mistook, it seems, his threat for a joke, and for a proof of his being at ease among them. No sooner, however, had he regained his liberty, than he proceeded to put his threat into execution. Gathering together what vessels he could, at Miletus, he attacked the pirates while they lay at anchor, took them all prisoners, and inflicted upon them the cruel punishment

with which he had jocosely threatened them during his detention.

8. Cæsar then returned to Rhodes, and so studiously did he apply himself to the arts of rhetoric, during his sojourn there, that, on his return to Rome, it contributed greatly to make him a favourite with the multitude. He neglected no means of ingratiating himself with the inferior classes of the people, as he hoped by their assistance, to subdue the opposition which he met with from the aristocracy of Rome, who were already jealous of his pretensions. He endeavoured thus to turn his talents of persuasion to good account, by promoting the cause of the tribunes, and obtaining for them the restoration of those powers of which they had been deprived in the time of Sylla. He also frequently pleaded in the Forum; and, by the suavity and softness of his manners, subdued the prejudices of some of his superiors. The citizens he took care to gratify by the sight of his splendid equipage, but still more by the hospitality of his house and his table. His enemies flattered themselves that his prodigality would prove his ruin; and he had, by the prosecution of his various schemes to obtain popularity and influence, involved himself in debts to so great an amount, that, before he came into any public office, he owed his creditors, if we may believe the authority of Plutarch, a thousand and three hundred talents, or above 500,000*l.* of our present money. Before he was consul (if another of the ancient historians is to be credited), he owed about four times as much. Crassus at this time became his surety for about a fifth part of his debts. These facts are sufficient proofs not only of the prodigality of our hero, but of the large expectations which Crassus himself, and the rest of his creditors, must have entertained of his future greatness, as well as of the confidence, almost unbounded, which they must have placed in his abilities and merits.

9. When he entered upon his quæstorship, he may be said to have fairly commenced his official career. This was in his thirtieth year. He now took an opportunity which was afforded him by his office, of exalting his family and pretensions in the eyes of the public. Having lost his wife Cornelia, the daughter of Cinna, and his aunt Julia, he determined to pronounce, according to custom, funeral orations for them in the Rostra. Among the praises of the

latter, he artfully and pompously contrived, thus to set forth his own genealogy;—"My aunt Julia," said he, "derived her descent by her mother from a race of kings, and by her father from the immortal gods; for the Marcii, from which she was descended, deduce their pedigree from Ancus Martius; and the Julii, which is that of her father, from the goddess Venus. We therefore unite in our descent, the sacred majesty of kings, the greatest among human kind, and the divine majesty of the gods to whom kings are subject."

10. In the room of Cornelia, by whom he had a daughter, named Julia, who become the wife of Pompey, he espoused the daughter of Q. Pompeius, and grand-daughter of L. Sylla; but this lady he afterwards divorced, upon suspicion of her having had an intrigue with Publius Clodius. The daughter of L. Piso Calphurnia, was his next wife. By the aid of these marriages, at different times, he strengthened his alliance with the most powerful persons in the Roman state.

11. His rising ambition visibly betrayed itself in a remarkable manner, while he was discharging the duties of his quæstorship in Spain (B.C. 66). As he was going the circuit of the country administering justice, he arrived at Gades, and seeing in the temple of Hercules a statue of Alexander the Great, he fetched a deep sigh, and discovered much vexation at the thought, that he himself had performed so little, at an age when Alexander had conquered the world. He therefore resolved to request his discharge, with the view of embracing the first occasion that might present itself, of doing something in the city, which might promote his views. For this purpose, he quitted the province before the usual term of service in his office had expired, and returned to Rome.

12. Among other schemes, which about this time tended to further his popularity, was one which he adopted during the period of his ædileship (B.C. 65). He spared no expense to render the games and amusements of the people as gratifying and splendid as possible*. In the

* The fondness of the Roman people for sights of this kind, may be judged of by the following facts: Pompey, in his second consulship (B.C. 57), exhibited 500 lions, which were all dispatched in five days; also 18 elephants. Cæsar, after the conclusion of the civil wars, not only

sports which he exhibited on this occasion, he not only provided the usual displays of wild beasts hunted in the circus, but he made the whole furniture of the theatre of solid silver, so that the animals of the forest were now, for the first time, seen treading on that metal. Cæsar not only showed his magnificence in this way, but contrived a spectacle that was still more likely to raise an enthusiasm in his favour. The statues of Marius, and the trophies and standards which that general had gained in his wars with Jugurtha and the Cimbri, had been treated with dishonour by Sylla. During the darkness of night, Cæsar caused these to be placed in the Capitol; and when morning came, the people were astonished and delighted, at beholding again these beautiful monuments of their past glory, brought to light, and glittering with gold. To no purpose did his enemies exclaim, that in this work Cæsar was preparing his road to tyranny, by acting in opposition to a formal decree of the senate. The loud shouts of the populace silenced all such murmurs, and testified their applause of a man, whom they thus declared worthy to be a leader of the party of Marius.

13. Shortly after this (B.C. 63), the conspiracy of Catiline was discovered and exposed by Cicero, who in his office as consul, and in his four celebrated orations on the subject, unmasked the traitor and his accomplices. The design of this conspiracy was to extirpate the senate, to plunder the treasury, and to set Rome on fire. Many of the greatest persons in the city were suspected to be privately engaged in it, and, among others, there were strong suspicions of Crassus and of Cæsar. The latter made a speech in favour of sparing the lives of some of those against whom a sentence of death had been voted. Among other sophistries, he used this argument, that to the wretched, death was no punishment, but that it put an end to all human mise-

gratified the people by all the usual performances of the circus, upon a very grand scale, but caused the hunting of wild beasts to be kept up successively for five days, and at last a battle was fought by 500 foot soldiers, 20 elephants, and 30 horse on each side. An artificial lake was also constructed, in which the Tyrian and Egyptian fleets, consisting of ships of two, three, and four banks of oars, with a number of men on board, afforded an animated representation of a sea-fight.

ries*,—a sentiment betraying that total unbelief of a state of future punishment, which there is reason to think was secretly cherished by all the leading men of this age, notwithstanding their outward profession of a contrary faith, in the religion of their country.

Cæsar's speech on this occasion, and his well-known designs, might justly have thrown some suspicion on his conduct; but he indignantly denied the accusation which certain witnesses brought against him, and appealed to Cicero, alleging that he had himself given information to the consul, as to many particulars of the conspiracy. So strong, however, was the feeling against him, on the part of some of the Roman knights, that they guarded all the avenues of the senate house, and he had some difficulty in escaping their swords. He gave up his opposition to the votes of the senate on this point, but did not venture to show himself again in the senate house, until he entered upon his prætorship with the new year (B.C. 62).

14. From this period, however, Cæsar's course became more favourable to the advancement of his fortunes. His office as prætor enabled him with effect to punish Vettius and Curius, his chief accusers; and at the end of his prætorship, he received by allotment his proconsular province of Spain. Here he gained fame by his military and political actions. During his journey thither, it is related that he declared to some of his companions, "that he would rather be the first man in a cottage of the Alps, than the second at Rome." But the day of his obtaining this distinction, was not far distant. He conquered the barbarians in Lusitania by his arms, and civilized them by his laws; and having subdued the whole country as far as the ocean, and been saluted by his victorious soldiers as Imperator or general, he made haste to Rome at the end of his year, resolving to seek, at the same time, for the honour of a triumph and a consulship. According to the usual forms, he could not obtain the former if he had first entered the city, nor the latter while he was without; and as the senate, led by Cato, resisted any change, he determined to forego his

* "In luctu atque miseriis mortem ærumnarum requiem, non cruciatum esse; eam cuncta mortalium mala dissolvere: ultra neque curæ, neque gaudio locum esse."—SALLUST.

triumph for the present, in order to secure the consulship.

15. It was now, therefore, that the genius of Cæsar began to assume a bolder attitude than before, against his enemies in the senate, who in vain secured by bribery a colleague, in the person of M. Calphurnius Bibulus, whom they supposed firm to their interests, and willing to resist the ambitious designs of his fellow-consul. Provoked by their obstinacy in electing one to whom he was personally averse, he cemented a league with Pompey and Crassus, the purport of which was, that nothing should be transacted in the government, which was not acceptable to any of the three. This league, known in history by the name of the Triumvirate (B.C. 60), lasted for about seven years.

16. As soon as he entered upon his consulship, he made another great advance in the popular esteem, by his proposing to the senate a law called the Agrarian, which had for its object to divide certain of the lands belonging to the state among the poorer citizens. This law, which, after much opposition from Bibulus, and among the senators from Cato in particular, was at length passed, with some modifications from its original design. The lands of Capua, the richest in Italy, were thus divided among eight thousand men, each the father of three or more children; a measure which could not fail to render him still more the idol of the people.

17. Bibulus found his influence thus reduced to a shadow. His bold colleague in office drove him from the Forum by his violent proceedings; he was insulted by the populace, and appealed in vain to the senate, who were too much awed by the bearing and influence of Cæsar to interpose. The insulted consul retired from the business of his office, and was so much dispirited, that, during the remaining eight months of the consular year, he never stirred from home, but only endeavoured to obstruct the proceedings of Cæsar by proclamations. Cæsar had therefore the sole management of public affairs. Hence some of the wits of his day, when they signed writings as witnesses, instead of adding in the consulship of Cæsar and Bibulus, as would have been the usual form, wrote in the consulship of Julius and Cæsar.

18. Cæsar's next important measure was to confirm the

acts of Pompey's administration in the east, and to distribute the provincial governments among his friends and supporters. Through the influence of the tribune Vatinius with the people, he procured for himself the command of Cisalpine Gaul, and of Illyricum, with three legions, for five years. He soon after obtained the addition of Gallia Comata, a name given to that province, because there the people wore their hair long, like women. It was in reference to this circumstance that, when he boasted of the triumph which he had obtained over his enemies, and told some of them in the senate house, that he should now treat them with what indignity he pleased, one of the members replied, "That will not be very easy for a woman to do." "Yes," rejoined Cæsar, jocosely, "it will; Semiramis has formerly reigned in Assyria, and the Amazons once possessed a great part of Asia."

19. Cæsar strengthened himself still further, by forming an alliance with foreign powers; particularly with Ptolemy Auletes, king of Egypt. In his own name and that of Pompey, he received from him twenty talents of gold, as the price of their favour and protection. He also provided more effectually for the wants of his army, by taking from the Capitol three thousand pounds weight of gold, replacing it by the same weight of gilded brass.

20. But the power which Cæsar had thus obtained over the senate, and the military glory which he afterwards acquired, were only the means to a still higher degree of eminence. His successes in the city were preliminary to others in the field of battle; and these, after a few years, were followed by his turning his arms against Pompey, who became his rival in the empire. After the death of Crassus (B.C. 53), who was slain in a war with the Parthians (a defeat in which the Romans suffered the greatest disgrace, by suffering their standards to fall into the hands of the enemy), the republic lost the only safeguard which had remained to preserve its liberties in any degree; for the wealth of Crassus was a check to curb, in some measure, the power of Pompey and the ambition of Cæsar*. A

* Crassus was supposed to be the richest of the Roman citizens, but his avarice was insatiable; and he took from the temple of Jerusalem, which he plundered, on his way to the Parthian war, an amount of 2,000,000*l*. Pompey, about twelve years previously (B.C. 65),

civil war therefore quickly ensued, which ended in the entire ascendancy of Cæsar, and his acquirement of that military power and sovereignty which was acknowledged by the senate, when they gave him the title of Perpetual Dictator (B.C. 47), a distinction which no one before had ever gained in the Roman state. He was now an absolute commander of all the forces in the commonwealth. He could appoint magistrates at his pleasure, and for what time he thought fit, and was thus armed with an authority nothing short of kingly power, though without the name. From this period, therefore, may be dated the rise of that unlimited sway, which was afterwards exercised by those who bore the name of Roman Emperors.

21. Without attempting here to trace minutely the progress of Cæsar as a warrior, during the nine years in which he held the military command, we may take a glance at some of his more remarkable achievements. His victories, after he entered the territory of Gaul (B.C. 56), were almost uninterrupted. The whole of this country, then bounded by the Pyrenean forest, the Alps, Mount Gebenna, and the two rivers of the Rhine and Rhone, he made subject to the Roman dominion. It was about 3200 miles in compass, and every part of it was reduced into the form of a province, except that which was possessed by the allies of the republic, or by such nations as merited particular favour. Upon this new acquisition, an annual tax was imposed of forty million sesterces.

22. Cæsar was the first of the Romans who passed the Rhine, against the Germanic nations. He defeated them in several engagements, some of which were attended with immense slaughter. The Belgæ opposed him with fierce valour; but his legions destroyed them in such great numbers, that his soldiers passed over marshes and rivers, on bridges composed of the bodies of the slain (B.C. 55). The Nervii also, a people of Cambray, encountered his legions with most desperate bravery, but were, after a severe contest, all cut off (B.C. 55). They lost in the field on this occasion nearly 600 of their principal men or senators; and, of 60,000 of their warriors, only 500 were left. These

had also taken Jerusalem and the temple, but would not touch any of its sacred treasure, though there was laid up there, as Josephus says, 2000 talents in gold, besides the sacred utensils.

having surrendered themselves, were spared by Cæsar, and sent back in safety to their own habitations. A tribe of the Germans, called the Atatuci, descendants of the Teutones and Cimbri, were closely besieged in their rock-built fortress, which they obstinately defended for a while from the Romans. But Cæsar at length took the place, and the inhabitants, to the number of 53,000, were sold for slaves.

23. The reader may form some general idea of the nature of these wars, from such instances, but for an exact and minute account of them, Cæsar's own work must be referred to, entitled "Commentaries on the Gallic War," which he wrote in eight books. In this work he describes his invasion of Britain (B.C. 55), and his first encounter with our warlike ancestors, who boldly combated with the invaders, as soon as they leaped from their galleys into the water, showing a spirit of bold resistance to their landing on the shores which astonished them. The superior discipline of the Roman soldiers, was here at first put to a sharp trial; and Cæsar himself observes, that his former good fortune was wanting only on this occasion; but, after a short struggle, the invincible arms of the Romans, and their art in war, proved too powerful a match for British courage, and they were enabled to fight their way to the isle of Thanet, where they made a temporary encampment. Cæsar was the first who introduced the Roman usages and the Roman authority into this island, then considered the remotest in the world—

"Ultimos orbis Britannos."—HORACE.

But neither now, nor in his next campaign, which took place the following spring, when he vanquished Cassibelaunus, did he effect more than a formal and nominal conquest of this country: all he could do, was to impose the payment of a tribute to Rome, and to carry away a few persons as hostages. His wars in Britain appear, from his own account, to have been the least satisfactory of any in which he engaged. They brought him no glory or advantage, in comparison of the losses and toils they cost him; a circumstance which was, no doubt, in a measure, the result of the bravery and fierce opposition which he had to contend with. The entire subjugation of Britain did not take place for many years afterwards, and was the work of

more than one Roman general. From the period of Cæsar's second expedition (B.C. 54), no attempt was made to bring the British under the power of Rome, until the time of Claudius (A.D. 43), or after the lapse of ninety-seven years. It was reserved for Agricola to accomplish a design in which Cæsar failed, and to achieve a more permanent dominion over the island, about one hundred and thirty-two years after Cæsar's conquests (A.D. 78).

24. In all his other wars Cæsar was far more successful. The civil war in which he engaged, began when he crossed the Rubicon (B.C. 49), or that river which was the boundary of his province as consul. In leaving this charge without the consent of the senate, he placed himself in direct opposition to the laws of his country; and thus plainly intimated his determination to be master of the commonwealth. Hoisting his standard, avowedly against Pompey, with whom for some years he had formed a strict alliance, he prepared to carry out that scheme of conquest, for which his victories in Gaul had more fully prepared him. His daughter Julia was also now dead. Crassus had perished in Parthia, and Pompey, having been appointed sole consul by the senate, was using all his influence to counteract the power of Cæsar.

Nothing, therefore, could decide the question who should reign, but the fall of one of these rival warriors. Cæsar, after many battles, brought this contest to an issue, by becoming the victor at the battle of Pharsalia (B.C. 48). Pompey himself, making his escape from the field, fled to Alexandria, in Egypt, where he was ignobly put to death on the banks of the Nile, by a disorderly crowd, who acted under the instigation of Theodotus, the minister of Ptolemy, king of that country. The head and the signet-ring of this vanquished hero were brought to Cæsar, who is said to have turned away with horror from the sight, and to have wept on this occasion. He caused the head to be burned with the choicest perfumes, and placed the ashes of it in a temple sacred to Nemesis, the avenger of cruelty. The end of this great general was an event which might well have drawn tears from Cæsar, for it exhibits one of the most sad reverses of fortune that history has recorded. Pompey had early acquired the name of "the Great," by that sort of merit which

had made him superior to what Rome had ever known before, in her most celebrated generals. He had triumphed, at three several times, over the three different regions of the known world, Europe, Asia, and Africa. In his triumph (A.D. 62), the list of his conquests is truly marvellous, for it included the following countries:—Asia, Pontus, Armenia, Cappadocia, Paphlagonia, Media, Colchis, Iberia, Albania, Syria, Cilicia, Mesopotamia, Phœnicia, India, Arabia, Scythia, Crete, with the sea in all its coasts. Among the people or potentates subdued, were the Basterni, Mithridates, and Tigranes. Among the captures, a thousand fortresses, nine hundred cities reduced, eight hundred galleys taken, above two millions of men in captivity, and of the towns repeopled, there were not less than three hundred and ninety-nine. After rewarding his soldiers, of whom none received less than fifteen hundred denarii, or about fifty pounds each, he carried into the treasury twenty thousand talents, or upwards of three millions and a half of our money. He led among his principal captives, Tigranes, son to the king of Armenia, with his wife and daughter; Zozime, the queen of Tigranes; Aristobulus, king of the Jews; a sister of Mithridates with five sons; and other splendid trophies for every battle he had fought. Among the ornaments displayed on this occasion, was the representation of a mountain in gold, having lions, deer, and other animals upon it, besides an image of himself incrusted with pearls. Yet all this magnificence terminated at last in his dying like a felon on the Egyptian shores, after a cowardly flight from that field of battle where he might have fallen with glory, losing nothing of that great reputation which was now transferred to his rival in the empire.

25. Cæsar's conquests in Egypt, after this event, were the next most famous of his wars. Here he quickly subdued the Egyptian sovereign, and set his fleet on fire,—an act which unhappily led to the burning of the Egyptian library, at that time esteemed the largest in the world. In taking the isle of Pharos, where there was a celebrated lighthouse, the conqueror narrowly escaped with his life. The boat being overcrowded, and about to sink, when he withdrew from the place, he was obliged to swim a considerable distance, to reach another vessel. But to do

this the more easily, he threw off his purple mantle, dragging it along by his teeth, and holding his papers above the water with his left hand (B.C. 47).

26. Having placed the government of Egypt under queen Cleopatra, whose beauty for a time subdued and softened the warlike spirit of the Roman general, he refrained from reducing this country to the condition of a province of the empire, and prepared himself to gather a nobler harvest of fame in the East. He rapidly extended his conquests into Asia Minor, and so suddenly defeated Pharnaces (B.C. 66), king of the Bosphorus, that he was enabled to write an account of his victory to Rome in the memorable sentence—

"Veni—vidi—vici."
I came—I saw—I conquered."

27. The last of Cæsar's wars requiring to be mentioned here, was that in which he marched to Utica, a strong city in Africa, held and defended by Cato, a noble Roman senator, whose stern and rigid virtue refused to lend any countenance to the ambition of one, whose object he believed it to be, to triumph over the liberties of his country. Cato, hearing of Cæsar's approach, and seeing no hope of defeating his designs, fell upon his own sword, consigning his children to the care of a relative of the conqueror (B.C. 46). When Cæsar heard of Cato's suicide, he is said to have exclaimed, "O Cato, I envy thee thy death, since thou enviedst me the saving of thy life!" This part of Roman history it is, which has been illustrated with so much beauty in Addison's celebrated tragedy.

28. When Cæsar had concluded his wars, he enjoyed the gratification of having four triumphal processions to his honour, in the course of one month, each triumph succeeding the other by an interval of a few days. The first celebrated his military success in Gaul; the second his victories in Egypt; the third his conquest of Pontus; and the fourth his subjugation of king Juba in Africa. In these national ceremonies, each triumph was marked by some peculiar and significant devices. In the triumph for Gaul, the Rhine, the Rhone, and the Ocean, were represented each by captives clothed in rich and splendid dresses. The various products of the conquered countries were displayed in ornaments made out of the Gallic lemon-tree, the

Egyptian tortoise-shell, the Pontic acanthus, and the African ivory; and the conqueror himself was carried up to the capitol in a chariot escorted by forty elephants*, bearing torches on his right and left hand (B.C. 46). Besides these triumphs, he celebrated a fifth, after his conquest of Pompey's sons in Spain (B.C. 45).

29. As soon as Cæsar had reached the height of his power, he began to reform many abuses, and to make many useful laws for the welfare of the Roman citizens. He expelled from the senate, such members as were found guilty of bribery, and endeavoured to enforce the statutes that had prohibited too great luxury in dress or diet. He established custom-houses, and collected a revenue from foreign goods that were imported into Rome. He placed the condition of the free labourer above that of the slave, and encouraged the fathers of large families by rewards. But perhaps his most signal public improvement was that of correcting the calendar, which he did by adjusting the length of the year to the sun's course, and by assigning to each month the number of days which they still contain. Owing to the liberty which had been taken, to insert days or months here and there throughout the year, to make up a supposed deficiency in the proper length of it, great confusion existed in the reckoning of time. The holidays designed for the harvest and the vintage seasons, now fell at a period when it was neither summer nor autumn. Cæsar, therefore, ordered that the year should consist in future of 365 days instead of 355, and that the deficiency should be made good, by the year in which this change was made (B.C. 46) consisting of sixteen months. But even this improvement did not entirely remedy the error, as the true period of the solar year, or of the sun's path through the twelve signs of the zodiac, is 365 days, 5 hours, and 49 minutes. In the time of Pope Gregory (A.D. 1582), it was therefore determined that ten days should be sunk, or struck out of the year. The new style (as this alteration was termed) did not take effect in England before A.D. 1752, when eleven days were dropped, between the 2nd and 14th of September.

30. By these and other measures of public utility, Cæsar

* Pompey is said to have been the first whose triumphal car was drawn or escorted by elephants.

gained much applause; and still more by the general forbearance which he displayed towards those who had been opposed to him. His popularity was seen, in the honours speedily heaped upon his name. A new temple was erected, in which Cæsar and Clemency were placed as deities, and adored with religious rites. Another temple, sacred to Liberty, was also dedicated to him. In all the temples and cities under the Romans, his statue was set up, and there was one in the temple of Romulus having the inscription, "To Cæsar, the invincible god." Besides this religious veneration, he received other marks of flattery from the citizens. A golden chair was placed for him in the senate-house, and he was styled Imperator, or Emperor, and Father of his country (B.C. 46–44).

31. Cæsar's boldness, address, skill, and activity as a warrior, were well suited to ensure the admiration and confidence of the Roman people, who could not but feel proud of such a hero.

He was a perfect master of his weapons; a complete horseman, and able to endure fatigue in an extraordinary degree. Upon a march, he used to go at the head of his troops, sometimes on horseback, but oftener on foot, regardless of the weather or the climate. He would occasionally travel in a carriage, at the rate of a hundred miles a day, and pass rivers in his way, sometimes by swimming, or supported with leathern bags filled with wind, so that he thus often prevented any intelligence of his approach. He carefully provided against any ambush on the part of his enemies; but his boldness was equally conspicuous as his caution. On one occasion, he crossed from Brundusium in the winter (B.C. 48), through the midst of the enemy's fleet; and at different times he ventured to visit a hostile camp in disguise. His presence of mind was conspicuous in situations where most men would have been at a loss what to do. In his expedition against Juba, as he stepped out of his ship, he slipped his foot and fell to the ground. But he gave at once a lucky and clever turn to what might have been thought an unfavourable omen, by exclaiming, "Africa, I hold thee fast!" (B.C. 45.) Instances are recorded of his restoring the fortune of a battle, when it was just about to be lost, by opposing and stopping his troops in their flight, at all hazards, and by snatching from a standard-

bearer the eagle, with which he was fleeing from the field in a moment of terror. "He rode," says his historian, "a very remarkable horse, with feet almost like those of a man, his hoofs being divided in such a manner as to have some resemblance to toes. This horse he had bred himself, and took particular care of, because the soothsayers interpreted this singularity, as an omen that his possessor would be master of the world. He backed him also himself, for the horse would suffer no other rider;"—a tale which, whether true or not, proves the hold which the character of Cæsar had upon the popular mind.

32. As curiosity naturally prompts us to inquire, what was the personal appearance of so distinguished a man, we may here give the reader the portrait which has been left us of him, in one of the ancient historians. He tells us that Cæsar was of lofty stature, with a fair complexion, and a countenance inclining to fulness. His eyes were black and piercing; his limbs well rounded, and his frame healthy and vigorous; but that towards the end of his life he was subject to fainting fits, and to disturbances in his sleep. It is remarked, that he was twice seized with epilepsy in the time of battle; and we may conclude that, upon the whole, his constitution was one of a highly excitable and nervous character. In the care of his person he was extremely nice. His hair was not only cut, and his beard shaved, with the utmost exactness, but the hairs that grew on other parts of his body were carefully plucked up by the roots. He was very uneasy, however, at being bald, as this had exposed him at times to much ridicule, and he endeavoured to hide the defect as much as possible, by bringing his hair forward from the top of the head. Of all the honours conferred upon him, by the senate or people, none gave him more pleasure than the right of wearing constantly a laurel crown, as it served in a measure to conceal his baldness. His dress was arranged with much care, though it had the appearance of some negligence; for he wore a flowing robe, fringed about the wrist, and loosely girded, which gave occasion, in his early life, to Sylla's calling him "the loose-coated boy!"

33. Nothing could be more exact and rigid than Cæsar's conduct in his household affairs. He put his cook in prison for serving him with a finer sort of bread than his guests.

His temperance was extreme, so that it was said he was the first man who came sober to the ruin of his country. In his diet he was far from choice. In other matters he was extravagant and profuse beyond measure, even upon trifles. He would purchase, at any cost, gems, statues, and pictures; and it is said that one of his motives in invading Britain, was the hope of finding pearls—an article in which he took especial delight, examining and comparing varieties of these one with another, with great nicety, and determining their weight by poising them in his hand.

34. Cæsar made no pretensions to be a virtuous character. His flatterers, knowing his weakness and gross sensuality, proposed a law that Cæsar should have as many wives as he pleased—the severest satire that could be passed upon him, if his youthful career had not been marked even by a worse stain. But among all vices, that which he was most guilty in the pursuit of, was ambition; for in this he became the destroyer of an immense multitude of his fellow-beings, by the scourge of war. Plutarch, the historian, summing up the account of his heroic deeds, in order to enhance his glory, observes, "that in the number of his engagements he exceeded all the great generals who had gone before him; that he took eight hundred cities, conquered three hundred nations; fought pitched battles at separate times with three millions of men; captured one million prisoners, and slew another million in the field." Nothing can, perhaps, more strongly show the extent and magnificence of his conquests, than the fact, that, at the period of his public triumph, he was enabled to bring into the public treasury sixty-five thousand talents, or above twelve millions and a half sterling.

35. All this success, great as it was, failed to satisfy the restless mind of a hero so ambitious. He formed a scheme for conquering the whole of the nations of the earth, whom he had not yet subdued; and to make this disposition the more manifest, he laid the foundations of a temple which he purposed to dedicate to Mars, and which should exceed in size every building of the kind in the world.

It was at this period of his eventful life that he contemplated the nobler undertaking, of draining the Pontine marshes, of making a road along the Apennines, and of constructing a new harbour at Ostium. His love of letters,

and of learned men, led him also to commit to Varro, the great grammarian of his age, a scheme for the collection and arrangement of a large library of Greek and Roman writers.

36. Engaged in these and other gigantic designs, the mind of Cæsar seems to have been too regardless of his own personal safety; and his career of glory was suddenly brought to a close, in a manner that he was but little prepared to expect. For though, on the day preceding his death, he had declared, in a conversation at the house of Lepidus, that he thought a sudden death the most desirable, yet he disowned or disbelieved the existence of a conspiracy against his life, when repeatedly warned of it. He had refused the crown, which the consul Antony more than once attempted to put upon his head in public, and disowned the title of king when saluted by that name. He therefore probably imagined, that none could accuse him of any tyrannical designs against the liberty of the state, much less those who called themselves his friends. But the case was far otherwise; and a band of resolute conspirators, who beheld his greatness with jealousy, entered into a plot for his destruction. More than sixty of the principal citizens were thus leagued together; men who affected to bewail the encroachments of a tyrant upon their ancient freedom. At the head of these were Brutus and Cassius.

37. To this conspiracy Cæsar fell a victim, on the Ides of March (B.C. 44). A soothsayer had warned him that this day might be fatal to him, and the night before, he had dreamt that he had ascended above the clouds, and shaken hands with Jupiter. His wife Calphurnia had also fancied, in her sleep, that the roof of the house was tumbling down, and her husband was stabbed in her bosom; but, disregarding these and many other evil omens, he proceeded to administer justice as usual, in the senate-house built by Pompey, remarking as he entered, that the Ides of March* were come without any mischief having befallen him; to which Spurinna replied, "They are come indeed, but are not past."

38. Under colour of paying Cæsar their compliments, the conspirators gathered round him, with daggers concealed

* The 15th of March.

beneath their robes. So little precaution had he taken against danger, that he had no weapon besides his stylus, or iron pencil, with which, when the attack was made upon him, he pierced the arm of the first assailant; but finding himself at once beset on all sides, he gave up further resistance, and fell, after receiving three and twenty wounds, with a fortitude and dignity worthy of his name.

39. This last scene of his life, has been most faithfully and graphically depicted by Shakspeare, in the tragedy of Julius Cæsar. Marc Antony thus describes it to the Roman populace:—

"If you have tears, prepare to shed them now.
You all do know this mantle: I remember
The first time ever Cæsar put it on;
'Twas on a summer's evening in his tent,
That day he overcame the Nervii:—
Look! in this place, ran Cassius' dagger through:
See, what a rent the envious Casca made:
Through this, the well-beloved Brutus stabb'd;
And, as he pluck'd his cursed steel away,
Mark how the blood of Cæsar followed it;
As rushing out of doors, to be resolved
If Brutus so unkindly knocked, or no;
For Brutus, as you know, was Cæsar's angel:
Judge, O ye gods, how dearly Cæsar loved him!
This was the most unkindest cut of all:
For when the noble Cæsar saw him stab,
Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,
Quite vanquish'd him: then burst his mighty heart;
And, in his mantle muffling up his face,
Even at the base of Pompey's statue,
Which all the while ran blood, great Cæsar fell."

40. Thus perished, in the 56th year of his age (B. C. 44), a man, whom the world may justly reckon among its greatest heroes. The fate of Cæsar, is a melancholy instance of the instability of human power and of human friendship. Cæsar had escaped the dangers of the battle-field, and had risen to the supreme authority; but he could not shield himself from the daggers of assassins, in the place where he might have seemed most secure; nor could he depend upon the sincerity of his friends, to save him from the malignant designs of those who were too jealous of his superiority. His example affords a strong instance of the very insecure foundation upon which the power of an ambitious man

rests,—one who plays the part of a tyrant though with moderation, for thus Cæsar must be regarded. On the authority of Cicero, we learn, that Cæsar thought tyranny* the greatest of goddesses; and had frequently in his mouth the verse of a Greek poet, which meant, that if right and justice were ever to be violated, it was for the sake of obtaining the sovereign rule.

41. The fall of Cæsar was, however, to be lamented as the death of a great man, possessed of a genius that must have made him memorable, even if he had never been a military hero. His orations were so much admired, that it is said he spoke with the same force as he fought. Among the great writers of this period, Varro may be mentioned, as a grammarian of the most extensive learning, and whose works are said to have amounted originally to five hundred volumes, of which all have perished, except two treatises, one on the Latin language, and the other on rural affairs. Lucretius was distinquished as a poet and advocate of the doctrines of Epicurus, who died (B.C. 55), on the same day that Virgil, his more illustrious successor in the art, assumed, at sixteen, the toga virilis—a period which was the second consulate of Pompey. Sallust and Livy, eminent as historians, and Cornelius Nepos, as a biographer, belong rather to the next era, or that of Augustus; their works not having been published till after the death of Cæsar. The most illustrious of all literary men in this age was Cicero, famous equally for his powers as an orator, a philosopher, and a statesman. Between Cicero and Cæsar there was never any cordial friendship, and though he could not but applaud the genius, and admire the success of the conqueror, yet he was constrained by principles which he had always cherished and professed, to avow that he perished as a tyrant deserved.

42. Such a sentiment, however just it might seem to a Roman, will not excuse the crime of Cæsar's murder, nor the conduct of his murderers, which was full of perfidy, as well as ingratitude. The liberties of Rome were not recovered by this atrocious deed; and it may be doubtful if the faction who conspired against him, had any nobler ideas on the subject of government than Cæsar himself entertained. Certain it is, that their enterprise entirely failed. If liberty

* The word meant at that time *arbitrary power* and sovereignty, without reference to acts of violence or cruelty.

was the only end in view, Cæsar died in vain. He was the first of a line of emperors bearing his name, each of whom was far more tyrannical than himself.

43. The perpetrators of the guilty deed reaped no honours or success among the people, but were, for the most part, considered as objects of disgust or indignation. Brutus himself perished, about two years afterwards (B.C. 42), at the battle of Philippi; and the rest of his companions did not long survive him. The Roman historian Suetonius, in his lives of the Twelve Cæsars, thus sums up the history of our great hero;—

"He died in the 56th year of his age, and was ranked among the gods, not only by a formal decree of the senate, but in the real persuasion of the vulgar. For during the games which his heir, Augustus, gave in honour of his memory, a comet shone for seven days together, rising always about eleven o'clock; and it was supposed to be the soul of Cæsar now received into heaven. The senate-house in which he was slain was ordered to be shut up, and a decree made, that the Ides of March should be called the Parricide; and that the senate should never more assemble on that day. Scarcely any of those who were accessory to his murder survived him more than three years, or died a natural death. They were all condemned by the senate; some were taken off by one accident, some by another. Part of them perished at sea, others fell in battle; and several of them slew themselves with the same dagger with which they had stabbed Cæsar."

44. The description of his funeral ceremonies, as it will convey some idea of the customs of the Romans at this period, we shall give nearly in the words of the ancient writer to whom we have just referred.

45. The time for his funeral being fixed by proclamation, a pile was erected in the field of Mars, near the tomb of his daughter Julia; and before the rostra there was placed a gilded tabernacle, resembling that of the temple of Venus Genetrix, and within it was an ivory bed, covered with purple and cloth of gold, on which the body was laid. At the head was a trophy, with the garment in which he was slain. In the funeral plays, acted before the funeral, several passages were sung from the old poets, one of which was to to this effect:—

"Is it possible, that they whom I preserved could have destroyed me?"—

alluding to Brutus and Cassius, whose lives Cæsar had spared after the battle of Pharsalia. The magistrates, and others who had borne office in the state, carried the bed from the Rostra into the Forum. While some proposed that the body should be burnt in the most sacred apartment of the temple of Jupiter, in the Capitol, and others in Pompey's senate-house, on a sudden two men appeared, with swords by their sides, and each bearing a couple of lances in their hands, who set fire to the bed with their lighted torches; and forthwith the whole company present threw in dry faggots, the desks and benches of the adjoining courts, and whatever came to hand. The musicians and players also stripped off the dress they had been supplied with from the furniture of his triumphs, for the present occasion, and having torn it, gave it to the flames. His veteran soldiers, likewise, cast in the armour which they had put on to attend his funeral. Most of the ladies did the same by their ornaments, with the necklaces and upper robes of their children. In this public mourning there joined a multitude of foreigners, expressing their sorrow according to the fashion of their respective countries, but especially the Jews*, who for several nights together, frequented the place where the body was burnt.

* The Jews paid especial honour to Julius Cæsar, from their hatred to Pompey, whom they never forgave for having treated their temple at Jerusalem with some indignities, at the time he made himself master of the city.

SUMMARY OF ERA THE FIRST.

1. The age of Cæsar remarkable.—2. His birth and family.—3. The successive offices through which Cæsar obtained his power.—4. His earliest success as a soldier.—5. The perils of his youth.—6. His impeachment of Dolabella.—7. His capture by pirates.—8. His arts to obtain popularity at Rome; his debts.—9. His quæstorship and genealogy.—10. His several marriages and family alliances.—11. Cæsar's ambition discovers itself in Spain.—12. His artifices to gain an ascendancy during his ædileship.—13. The Catilinarian conspiracy, and Cæsar's connection with it.—14. His conduct as prætor; his success as proconsul in Spain.—15. Obtains the consulship, and forms a league with Pompey and Crassus.—16. Passes the Agrarian law.—17. Deprives Bibulus, his colleague, of all authority.—18. Procures the provinces of Gaul, and treats his enemies with contempt.—19. Forms an alliance with Ptolemy, King of Egypt; takes a large sum from the public treasury.—20. His successes lead to his obtaining the title of perpetual dictator.—21. Retrospect of Cæsar's victories in Gaul.—22. His battles with the German nations.—23. His wars in Britain a failure; this island not subdued till a later period.—24. Cæsar passes the Rubicon; defeat and death of Pompey; his fame as a general.—25. Cæsar conquers Egypt.—26. Places Cleopatra on the throne; obtains a rapid victory over Pharnaces.—27. The war in Africa, and death of Cato.—28. Cæsar's triumphal processions.—29. He reforms the abuses of the state, and regulates the Calendar.—30. The various honours heaped upon him.—31. Instances of his military boldness and presence of mind; his horse; stratagems in war, &c.—32. Description of Cæsar's person, dress, habits.—33. His household economy and expensive tastes.—34. His want of chastity; his worst vice, ambition; summary of his wars, and their results.—35. His gigantic designs for future conquests; public improvements effected and designed by him.—36. A conspiracy formed for Cæsar's destruction.—37. Disbelieves

the existence of such a plot.—38. Goes to the senate-house, and is attacked by the conspirators.—39. Shakspeare's description of his death.—40. Cæsar's fate a warning to tyrants.—41. Some of the principal writers of his age noticed. Cicero; his opinions of Cæsar's death.—42. Failure of this event in promoting the end designed by it.—43. The fate of his murderers.—44. His popular deification after his death, &c.—45. Description of his funeral ceremonies.

ERA THE SECOND.

THE LIFE OF AUGUSTUS CÆSAR.

THE ERA OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST; AND OF THE GOLDEN AGE OF ROMAN LITERATURE.

1. The age of Augustus is one which on many accounts claims attention. This Emperor ruled over the Roman state, at a time of more importance than any other in the history of mankind. The period commonly expressed by the two Latin words "Anno Domini," meaning "in the year of the Lord," directs us to an era when Jesus Christ was born. This event took place during the time when Augustus was at the head of a sovereignty exercised by Rome over Judea and the neighbouring provinces. A direct reference is made to this most interesting fact, in the beginning of St. Luke's Gospel (c. ii. v. 1).

2. About seventeen years after the death of Julius Cæsar, Octavius, his nephew, appears upon the stage of the world's history as Roman Emperor; Augustus was a title conferred upon him (B.C. 27) instead of Octavius, his proper family name. He was at that time in his thirty-sixth year, his birth having taken place in the year of the Catilinarian conspiracy (B.C. 63). For the space of ten years after Cæsar's death, he had governed the state in conjunction with Lepidus and Marc Antony.

3. The latter was the first to engage in a series of artful and violent measures to usurp the chief power in the state, after Julius Cæsar, and being consul, he raised the standard of civil war against Brutus, who acted under the authority of the senate, as prætor of Greece. Octavius received a special commission to assist Brutus in his operations against

Antony, who was declared an adversary to the state, and whom it was necessary, for the peace of the republic, to subdue or to acknowledge as a dictator. By these generals Antony was defeated, and driven with a small part of his forces beyond the Alps, where his situation must soon have been desperate, had not Lepidus, who commanded the legions in Spain, entered into a league of amity with him. In this they persuaded Octavius to join, and the result was a combination of three powerful and ambitious men at the head of the principal forces of Rome. Under the name of a triumvirate, they were pledged to each other to pursue such schemes as should throw the whole power of the state into their hands; but there can be no doubt that the design of each of them was, by this combination, to prepare the way more effectually for that individual supreme power which had fallen from the hands of Cæsar.

These three successful generals united their forces in the civil war against Brutus and his followers, which was terminated at Philippi (B.C. 42); and after that victory, the head of Brutus was ordered to be thrown down at the pedestal of Cæsar's statue.

4. Octavius was by his mother's side nearly related to Pompey. Julius Cæsar was his great-uncle, and, by adoption, his father, whom he attended in his wars in Spain, against the sons of Pompey (B.C. 45). From him he inherited not only a part of his estate, but the genius which enabled him to possess himself of the affections of the people, and the art of making his way to the supreme authority by subduing his rivals. Obtaining the assistance of the veteran soldiers, by liberal promises of the lands belonging to some of the great towns in Italy, he was not long in acquiring an entire mastery of the empire.

5. With the assistance of these forces, he at length ventured to throw off all connection with his two colleagues (B.C. 32); he banished Lepidus to Circeii, and procured a proscription against the other member of the triumvirate, as an enemy of the state. At the battle of Actium (B.C. 31), in Egypt, Marc Antony was entirely defeated, and destroyed himself in a fit of despair. The beautiful queen Cleopatra also fell into the hands of Octavius, but not before she had poisoned herself with the bite of an asp (B. C. 30), to deprive the conqueror of his hoped-for triumph. Egypt

was now reduced to a Roman province, and to make it more capable of supplying Rome with corn, the ditches of the Nile were cleaned out, and that noble river made more capable of perfectly fulfilling its proper work of enriching the plains of the country during the period of its overflow.

He also built the city called Nicopolis, to celebrate his victory, and ordained that games should be held there every five years. From the period of his conquest over Egypt, he appears to have continued the undisputed head of the government at Rome (B.C. 30).

6. In military affairs Augustus did not rival the fame of Julius Cæsar. His wars were for the most part conducted not in person, but by his lieutenants. Three occasions only are particularly specified, in which he was present with his army: in Dalmatia, when he was but a youth; in Egypt, which led to the defeat of Antony; and in the war against Cantabria (B.C. 24).

In addition to these wars carried on by himself, he conquered by means of his generals Illyricum and Rhætia; besides the Vindelici and Salisii, inhabitants of the Alps (B.C. 15). He also put a stop to the inroads of the Dacians, and drove the Germans beyond the river Elbe (B.C. 11). He never received any signal defeat except in Germany, where Lollius and Varus were his representatives; the latter with considerable loss and danger to the empire—three legions and many of the principal officers being cut off; a disaster for which he always kept the anniversary as a day of mourning (B.C. 16).

7. At this period the Roman Empire embraced an immense range of territory, and Augustus was sensible of its too great magnitude. On the east, it stretched to the Euphrates; on the south, to the cataracts of the Nile, the deserts of Africa, and mount Atlas; on the west, to the Atlantic ocean; and on the north, to the Danube and the Rhine, including the best part of the known world. Succeeding emperors made but few additions to this vast dominion. Trajan only subdued Mesopotamia and Armenia, east of the Euphrates, with Dacia, that lay to the north of the Danube (A.D. 103–106). After this, in the reign of Antoninus, the Roman power extended itself also over Britain, as far as the Frith of Forth and the Clyde (A.D. 145–161).

8. Although in appearance Augustus was never fond of an ostentatious display, yet, from a regard to the wishes of others, who had shared his victories, he thought fit to exhibit a triumphal procession, which was suited to display the glories of his martial career. Three separate triumphs were therefore celebrated by him (B.C. 29), each of which lasted three days. The first of these was for his victory over the Pannonians and Dalmatians (B.C. 34); the second for his victory at Actium; and the third for his victories in Egypt. This last triumph was particularly splendid. It was enriched not only with the treasures which had been amassed in Egypt, but amongst these was carried the effigy of the late queen, having, in allusion to the supposed manner of her death, the asp represented on her arm. This pageant was followed by her surviving children, who were led as captives.

A description of the usual ceremony observed on such occasions, will enable the reader to form some idea of the honours usually decreed by the Roman senate to their great military chieftains.

Foremost in the procession went musicians of various kinds, singing and playing triumphal songs. Next were led the oxen to be sacrificed, having their horns gilt, and their heads adorned with fillets and garlands. Then, in carriages, appeared the richest spoils taken from the enemy —statues, pictures, plate, armour, gold and silver, and brass; with golden crowns and other gifts sent by the allied and tributary states. The captive leaders followed, in chains, with their children and attendants. After these came the lictors, having their fasces wreathed with laurel, followed by a great company of musicians and dancers dressed like satyrs, and wearing gilded crowns. In the midst of them was a masked figure, clothed in the garb of a female, whose business it was, with her looks and gestures, to insult the vanquished. Next followed a long train of persons carrying perfumes. Then came the victorious general himself, dressed in purple embroidered with gold, with a crown of laurel on his head, a branch of laurel in his right hand, and in the left an ivory sceptre with an eagle on the top, having his face painted with vermilion. He stood in a chariot richly gilt, adorned with ivory, and drawn by four white horses, sometimes by elephants, attended by his

relations, and a great crowd of citizens, all in white. His children also rode in the chariot with him; and that he might not be too elated, a slave, carrying a golden crown sparkling with gems, stood behind him, and frequently whispered in his ear, "Remember that thou art a man!" After the general followed the consuls and senators, on foot. His military tribunes were commonly on horseback, by his side. The victorious army, horse and foot, came last, crowned with laurel and decorated with the gifts which they had received for their valour, singing their own and their general's praises, and often exclaiming, "Io Triumphe!" in which they were joined by all the citizens, as they passed along. The oxen having been sacrificed, the general gave a magnificent entertainment in the Capitol, to his friends and the chief men of the city, after which he was conducted home by the people, with music and a great number of lamps and torches.

9. The character of Augustus must, however, be regarded more as that belonging to a pacific than a warlike sovereign. We are told by Suetonius, that he never made war upon any people without a just and irresistible cause, and that he required some of the barbarous nations, in their treaties of peace, not only to take a solemn oath to fulfil these, but to give female hostages, because such would the most effectually secure an agreement of this kind from being broken.

10. Other proofs of the same disposition are furnished by historians; but none is more worthy of mention than the shutting up of the temple of Janus, three several times during his reign: (B.C. 29), (B.C. 25), (B.C. 4).* From the building of the city, this token of universal peace throughout the empire had only occurred twice previously to the time of Augustus, a period of above 700 years†. The

* As our Saviour was born four years before the vulgar era, *i. e.* in the year 749 from the foundation of Rome (A.U.C.), this will bring the third shutting of the temple of Janus to the exact year of the Nativity, if we suppose that the former event took place according to the vulgar era (B.C. 4), which seems very probable.

† The first time when the temple of Janus was closed was in the days of Numa, who reigned (B.C. 713–670) a period of 43 years, during which the temple of Janus was closed. The second time was at the end of the first Punic war, during the consulship of Manlius, as Livy states, or B.C. 236. When Augustus closed the temple for the third time in his reign, it remained shut for about twelve years.

third time, when this temple was closed in the days of Augustus, and the last time in this reign, coincides in a remarkable manner with the nativity of him who may well be termed "the Prince of Peace." Poets and divines have not failed to notice so striking a circumstance. Milton has thus referred to it:—

> —— "The meek-eyed Peace,
> Crowned with olive green, came softly sliding
> Down through the turning sphere,
> His ready harbinger,
> And waving wide her myrtle wand,
> She strikes an universal peace through sea and land."
>
> ODE ON CHRIST'S NATIVITY.

11. When Augustus had arrived at the point of his ambition, he professed to entertain a purpose of freeing himself from the cares and dangers of empire, by restoring the old commonwealth. But after deliberating with his two favourites, Agrippa and Mæcenas, whose views differed on the advantages of his resigning the government, he at length acquiesced in the opinion of the latter, that it would contribute more to the general advantage of the state, that the chief power should be vested in the hands of one man. He made a show, however, of resigning his power, at the end of the civil wars, as if unequal to the load of government; but was easily persuaded by the general voice of the senate to resume his powers, limiting himself to the exercise of it for ten years; at the end of which period he affected again to receive his title for a new period of sovereignty, which was to last only five years. By these limitations, he avoided the appearance of being too absolute a monarch; dreading perhaps the fate of Cæsar, and wishing to reign by craft and policy, and the consent of the people, rather than by the force of arms, or from the love of power.

12. The authority conferred upon Augustus as emperor was certainly of the most unlimited kind. It belonged to him to levy armies, to impose taxes, to undertake wars, to make peace, to command all the forces of the republic, to have the power of life and death within, as well as without, the city; and to do whatever the consuls, and others invested with supreme command, had a right to do.

13. Few sovereigns in the possession of so much power have used it with more apparent humility than Augustus

did. He professed to abhor the title of Lord or Dominus, as a scandalous affront; and when, in a mimic piece performed in the theatre at which he was present, these words were expressed—"O just and gracious Lord,"—and the whole company testified their approbation by shouts, he immediately put a stop to this flattery by significant signs of his displeasure, and the next day by a public proclamation. He would never suffer himself to be thus addressed, even by the members of his own family. He avoided all ostentatious displays of himself, walking commonly in the streets on foot, and at other times being carried in a covered chair. People of all ranks were admitted to pay their respects, and present their petitions, to him. His conduct in the senate, and also among his friends, was of the most familiar, polite, and obliging kind, having nothing in it of state or ceremony. He addressed the senators by name; and when he left the house, bade them separately farewell. He would exchange civilities with them at their houses, and visit and console them in sickness. He treated libels against his person with contempt, and only prohibited them, when they were published without a name. He never recommended his sons to the people, without adding these words—"If they deserve it." He would not permit any temple or altar to be consecrated to him, unless in conjunction with the city of Rome; and when the whole body of the people offered him with one consent the title of Father of his country, he, with tears in his eyes, replied to the compliment, by saying that now he had obtained the utmost of his wishes; and that he had only to beg of the immortal gods this continuance of the affection of the people towards him, to the last moments of his life.

14. It is to be mentioned also, to the honour of Augustus, that he made use of his power for the enforcement of some salutary regulations, affecting the manners of the citizens. He issued an order that no young persons of either sex should appear at any public diversions in the night, and restrained the great licence which had been admitted in the practice of divorce. He sheltered the citizens from unjust prosecutions, and gave the administration of the laws new vigour and efficacy, by the appointment of an additional number of judges, and by requiring a more speedy

determination of causes, assisting them by his own attendance in the courts of justice, and displaying on all occasions that mildness and attention which befits the character of an upright and impartial arbiter between contending parties.

15. To give more efficiency to the laws, and to ensure the respect due to them, Augustus reformed the senate. For this purpose he reduced their number, which was at this time above a thousand, providing that very mean persons who had hitherto been chosen by interest, and were more open to bribery, should be excluded from that office. He ordered, also, that every member of the senate, before he took his seat in that house, should pay his devotions in the temple of the god where the senate assembled. He chose a new privy council every six months, and allowed the senators great freedom of speech upon public questions, asking their advice, and endeavouring to ascertain their real opinions, as if he himself were unbiassed by any prejudice, and had only in view the best interests of the state.

16. The public spectacles in which the Romans took so much pleasure, he encouraged by his presence and by gifts, allowing them a considerable degree of licence beyond that which had been usual. He showed his humanity by not permitting the gladiators to fight as they had been used to do, without sparing the life of the party that was worsted. To promote the comfort of the different ranks, he assigned them their several places, not sanctioning a promiscuous assemblage of the people. From some of the performances, which were incompatible with female modesty, he excluded the women, and would not allow them to behold the combats of the gladiators, except from the upper and most retired benches of the theatre.

17. In generosity of mind towards those who had injured him, Augustus displayed a truly placable and forgiving disposition. Many of the party opposed to his advancement he pardoned at the close of the civil wars, and suffered them to rise to the highest eminence in the city. Some of his avowed enemies he suffered to escape with very slight punishment; and others who abused him by scurrilous language he treated with the contempt they deserved. On one occasion, when his attention was called to an offence

of this kind, he replied by saying, "Do not be so much enraged that any person should speak evil of me. It is sufficient that we have it in our power to prevent any one from doing us a real mischief."

18. His conduct towards foreign powers who had been humbled by the Roman arms, manifested a rare magnanimity of mind. The kingdoms of which he had become master by right of conquest he restored, with but few exceptions, to their former possessors; or bestowed them upon strangers, instead of retaining them for himself or his favourites. Between the kings who were his allies he studied to promote peace by every method, regarding them as if they were members and parts of the same empire; and exercising the same paternal regard towards their children while they were under his protection, as if they were his own.

19. At one period of his successful career, he made a visit to the eastern provinces of the empire (B.C. 21), for the purpose of more fully inspecting their condition, and reforming the administration of his government. On his way back to Italy (B.C. 19), during his stay at Samos, a circumstance occurred which serves to show the fame of the Roman people at that time, among the nations of the East, beyond the limits of the empire. He there received the ambassadors of many countries, and among these an embassy from India, attended with a numerous retinue, bringing a variety of presents. But what probably most entertained the curious, and the emperor himself, was the exhibition of an Indian sage or Brahmin, who, having taken his resolution to die, was ambitious to make his exit in presence of the Roman court. Being indulged in this desire, and flattered with the attendance of a numerous crowd of spectators, he prepared a funeral pile, which he set on fire, and then, with much ostentation and gravity, threw himself into it. His tomb was set up at his request, marked with the following inscription:—"Here lies Tarmurus, an Indian of Bargosa, who, in the manner of his country, ended his days by a voluntary death." In this action we may see an illustration of the manner in which a man may be led to sacrifice life for the love of glory, a motive which is probably the ruling principle of many of these self-immolations which

are performed among the natives of India to the present day.

20. During the pacific reign of this prince, the city was greatly indebted to him for the improvement of its buildings. The city of Rome he had found much injured and debased by the lapse of time, and by various accidents. He therefore sought to make it more suitable to the grandeur of the empire. So much was it improved during the period of his reign, that he justly boasted, that he had "found it brick and left it marble." Its splendour was now augmented by the temples which he erected to Mars, to Apollo, to Jupiter, and to the popular deities. Besides these he rebuilt the Forum, and a variety of other handsome structures. He also provided for the better security of the city against the inundations of the river Tiber, by enlarging and deepening its channel, which had in many places become greatly straitened by the rubbish thrown into it. In widening the Flaminian causeway, the great avenue and approach to the city, he expended a considerable sum, which he defrayed from the spoils of war. Notwithstanding all these improvements, he had still immense treasures at his command; and, upon one occasion, he deposited in the sacred apartment of Jupiter Capitolinus sixteen thousand pounds of gold; with pearls and jewels to the amount of fifty millions of sesterces.

21. Augustus bestowed much attention on the work of reforming the religion of his country, and restoring it to its highest state of magnificence. He abolished some of its grossest corruptions, regulating its priesthood, and aiming to make its worship in every way as splendid as possible. On the death of Lepidus (B. C. 13), he assumed the office of Pontifex Maximus, and annexed it in himself and his successors, to the imperial titles and honours. From this time his zeal for the national religion became manifest in the number of temples which he built or endowed. In a famous inscription, drawn up by his own hand, and recorded on the Ancyrian monument, he specifies the temples he had repaired or rebuilt, the spoils he had replaced in them, and his general care for these divine things. A circumstance, still more worthy of recollection, is the favour he showed to the Temple at Jerusalem. He presented it with a daily

sacrifice of a bull and two lambs;—and the empress Livia adorned this holy edifice with costly gifts and vessels of gold, being charmed, as we are told by an ancient Jewish writer, with the majesty and simplicity of the sacred rites there performed.

22. Enough has been said of the character of Augustus, to show that he truly deserved the epithet which was bestowed upon him, and which denotes a prince of majestic and noble character. The Romans were fully sensible of the many benefits conferred upon the state by his administration; and although his power was founded upon the destruction of their ancient liberties, this event could hardly have been regretted under one who swayed the sceptre with so much wisdom and moderation. Whatever opinion may be formed of his conduct in following the steps of Julius Cæsar, for the attainment of supreme power, yet he must be allowed greatly to have surpassed his model, in the beneficial way in which he exercised it. His ambition to preserve the memory of those, to whom he thought the Roman state most signally obliged, displayed itself in many great designs which are characteristic of the age and of the people. His policy may perhaps be resolved into the respect that he entertained for the memory of generals, who had, as he thought, raised the Roman state from poverty to grandeur. We are told, that he honoured such next to the immortal gods. He repaired and built all the public edifices erected by them, preserving the former inscriptions, and placing statues of them all in a triumphal dress in both piazzas of his Forum; and further declaring his object, in the terms of the following proclamation: "My design in doing this is, that the Roman people may require from me, and all succeeding princes, a conformity to those illustrious examples." His opinion of the duty of those entrusted with military command merits attention, and affords perhaps, the best illustration of the means by which he obtained so much distinction. He thought nothing more derogatory to the character of an accomplished general than haste or rashness; on which account he used frequently to quote the Greek sayings "Hasten slowly;" "The cautious captain is better than the bold one;" and "What 's done enough, is done well enough." He was accustomed also to say, that a battle or a war ought never to be undertaken,

unless the hope of advantage overbalanced the fear of loss. "For those," said he, "who pursue small advantages with great hazard, resemble such as fish with a golden hook, the loss of which, if the line should break asunder, could never be compensated by all the fish they might take."

23. In his private and domestic life this Emperor presents an example which is stained, like that of his successors, with some of the odious vices common to the age and people among whom he flourished. Upon this part of the history it would be unsuitable here to enlarge. Something, however, may be said of his family. He lost his mother Accia, in his first consulship (B.C. 43), when he was twenty years of age. His father Octavius died when he was only four years old. Scribonia, his second wife, he divorced on account of the perverseness of her temper. But he had by her a daughter named Julia, first betrothed to Marcellus, the son of Octavia, his sister, a highly-promising and virtuous youth. Of him it was that Virgil introduced some very celebrated lines into his poem, which being read to Augustus and Octavia, they were thought so beautiful that the poet was rewarded with ten sestertia* for every line of them. But the Emperor was very unfortunate in all his children, though he had taken the greatest pains in their education. His daughter Julia, and her daughter of the same name, made themselves so shockingly infamous by their depraved and licentious manners, that he banished them both. Of his daughter's behaviour he was so ashamed, that he laid an account of it before the senate, in a narrative read to them by the quæstor. At one time he had thoughts of putting her to death; but foregoing this design, he subjected her to severe restraints in her confinement, and could never be persuaded to recall her. His grandson Agrippa he also renounced for his rude, intractable, and insolent behaviour; and procured an act of the senate to confine him for life. Of these three members of his family he used to speak with the greatest sorrow, calling them his three imposthumes or cancers. For his wife, Livia Drusilla, he always cherished the warmest affection; but had no issue by her. He adopted Tiberius, her son by her former husband of the same name, together

* Amounting to about 2000*l.* of our present money. The 25 lines, for which this splendid gift were bestowed upon the poet, are in the sixth book of the Æneid—860-885. This event took place B.C. 23.

with his grandchildren and his nephew Germanicus, as his heirs.

24. Augustus was slow in forming friendships, but when once contracted, he maintained them with great constancy. One feature of this kind has rendered him a more conspicuous example than any of those who have filled the same rank in the histories of the world. Augustus is remarkable above all princes for the regard he evinced for the society of men of genius. Virgil and Horace, the two greatest of the Roman poets in every sense, were treated by this prince with the utmost degree of kindness and friendship. To the former he restored the estate (B.C. 40), which he had lost in the division of lands under the Triumvirate; and the latter received from Mæcenas an equivalent for his confiscated estate, in the gift of his Sabine farm (B.C. 34). He corresponded with them by familiar letters when absent; and an anecdote is told of his sitting down with them at a table, and saying jestingly, that he sat between sighs and tears, alluding to the asthma of Virgil, and the weak watery eyes of Horace. In making these poets his friends and correspondents, the Emperor no doubt had some regard to the advantages which his doubtful claim to the empire at first might acquire, by the weight of splendid talents engaged in his favour, and by the fame thus to be reflected upon his name and actions. Yet it may reasonably be believed, that the patronage of genius for its own sake was in accordance with a disposition like that of Augustus, capable of deriving pleasure as an author from the highly-finished performances of poetry and eloquence.

25. Upon these two main favourites of the court of Augustus, both honour and wealth were liberally bestowed. But the great poem of Virgil, in which he traces the history of Æneas, with an evident design to convey the idea that the Emperor was his descendant, did not appear before the public till after the poet's death. Both of these poets, dying before the Emperor, left him their heir; Horace the whole of his estate, Virgil a fourth part of it. The works of the former consisted of Odes, formed upon the Greek models, and Satires and Epistles; those of the latter, of pastoral dialogues, or, as they are generally called, Bucolics; and a noble poem termed the Georgics, in which he describes with the elegance of true poetry, all the charms of rural occupa-

tions, and the whole course of field husbandry throughout the several seasons of the year. Upon this the fame of Virgil rested during his lifetime. But never perhaps was a poet treated with higher honours while he lived. When he went to the theatre, the whole audience stood up as he entered, greeting him with loud plaudits, and paying him the same honours that they did the Emperor himself.

26. It is to be regretted for the fame of Augustus, that his conduct towards two of the distinguished writers of his day should have been disgraced by some severities which are not in agreement with his general character. Cicero was one of the first to feel the deadly influence of that party spirit of revenge, which polluted the earlier path of this Emperor with many a noble victim—sacrificed, as it was thought justly, to the shades of Cæsar (B.C. 43). Cicero having approved of the death of that hero, though he took no part in it, and being considered as one of the most dangerous enemies of the Triumvirate, it is easy to understand the principle of that great orator's proscription. This act, however, may be recorded as chiefly the work of Antony, whom Cicero had denounced as a public enemy, in his celebrated orations, entitled the Philippics. Octavius gave his consent to the death of Cicero with the greatest reluctance, and the older historians tell us, that he struggled for two days with Antony to preserve him*. But the gentle Ovid —the poet of the Metamorphoses—was another of the victims of tyranny in this reign, being condemned to an exile (A.D. 9), in which he spent the remaining period of his life, for some offence which can now be but faintly conjectured. He was thus subjected to a severe fate, for which there does not seem any plausible reason, beyond that of the private resentment of Augustus himself, who made the ostensible ground of this sentence his having corrupted the Roman youth by immoral writings.

27. The Emperor himself did not, however, live long enough to reverse the sentence. This poet passed seven

* Cicero was beheaded by a party of soldiers, sent by Antony to his Tusculan villa to execute the bloody deed, who overtook him as he was escaping in a litter. His head and his hands being cut off, were brought to Rome by Popilius, a tribune or colonel, whose head he had formerly saved. Antony fixed them up in the Forum, and rewarded the soldiers with a crown, and about 8000*l.* sterling.

years in a melancholy exile, during which he wrote his Tristia. Augustus was now in an advanced stage of life, and died at Nola (A.D. 14), wanting but little more than a month to complete his seventy-sixth year. His death, instead of being like that of his predecessor, was an extremely calm and peaceful one. He is said to have almost suddenly expired without pain, whilst receiving the kisses of Livia his wife, and uttering these words:—"Livia, live mindful of our marriage, and fare thee well." His persuasion when dying was, that he had acted his part well, and was retiring from the stage of life with the highest applause.

28. Whatever may be the differing sentiments that subsequent ages have entertained on this subject, there can be no doubt as to the enthusiasm with which his memory was regarded by the Roman people. More extraordinary omens were said to have preceded his birth than perhaps were ever remembered of any other great man, as the tokens of future greatness; and after his decease it was moved in the senate-house, that the whole period of his life should be called the Augustan age, and inserted in the calendar under that title. And immediately after his body had been burnt, according to custom, a man of prætorian rank affirmed upon oath that he saw his spirit ascend up to heaven.

29. That Augustus was a great benefactor to the Roman people it would be folly to doubt, for during the period of his government the empire enjoyed a prosperity and tranquillity altogether unexampled. The state, under his paternal sway, seems to have reached the highest point of its greatness and glory; and its decline from this era was therefore in some measure inevitable, even if the vices and misgovernment of some of his successors had not hastened on its period of degeneracy.

30. This prince, by a custom which had become fashionable in his days, viz., of leaving the Emperor a legacy, inherited from the wills of his friends, it is said, the astonishing sum of more than 32,000,000*l.* sterling. Yet almost the whole of this immense fortune, besides his two paternal estates and others, he left at his decease to be expended upon the public, allotting large bequests to the several tribes, and to various divisions of the Roman army. Among the documents relating to his will, he wrote one containing a narrative of his actions, which he intended should be in-

scribed on brass plates, and placed before his mausoleum; and another in which was drawn up a concise account of the state of the empire, the number of its soldiers, the state of the treasury, and various particulars connected with the public welfare. From all these facts it may be gathered, that there have been but few sovereigns who have proved themselves more fit to be entrusted with the powers of an absolute monarch than Augustus.

31. The following details will supply the curious reader with a familiar picture of the domestic life, habits and private character of Augustus.

This Emperor had a peculiar aversion to large and sumptuous palaces. Some that had been raised at a great expense by his granddaughter Julia, he ordered to be levelled to the ground. He lived himself for the most part in a small house, no way remarkable for size or ornament, and chiefly resided in the city of Rome. For what was rare, curious, and antique, he had a considerable taste. He adorned his residence in the city with things of this kind, but especially with statues and pictures. At Capreæ, where he occasionally dwelt, he had in his mansion a collection of ancient armour, and some of the fossil bones of animals, at that time believed to be the remains of giants.

32. In his mode of living his frugality was such, that it might have seemed almost parsimonious. In the furniture of his house, and in his dress, there was but little to distinguish the Emperor from the common citizen.

His entertainments were elegant, but more select than splendid; he was very scrupulous whom he invited to his table. On certain days of festivity, he would be regardless of expense in the favours he bestowed upon his guests, and distributed among them presents of sumptuous vestments, as well as gold and silver in abundance. But at these times, he sometimes indulged his humour in a kind of lottery, requiring of them to purchase tickets of uncertain value, and pictures with their backs turned towards the company, every one being obliged to buy something, and to run the chance of loss or gain. His ordinary diet was a pattern of simplicity. Coarse bread and cheese, green figs, and ripe raisins, were his chief food. Of wine he drank but little, and scarcely any in the daytime. After supper he commonly withdrew to a couch in his study, where he

committed to writing an account of the principal transactions of the day. He retired late to rest, and never slept more than seven hours.

33. The person of Augustus was noble, handsome, and graceful. His countenance had a peculiar look of serene majesty, and his eyes were full of fire and animation. His eyebrows were large, and met together. He had an aquiline nose, and curling hair, rather inclining to a yellow colour. In stature he did not reach above the middle height, but his limbs were so well set and proportioned, that he appeared taller than he really was. In his constitution he was far from robust, especially towards the decline of life. But by taking great care of his health, and by exercise, diet, and a moderate use of the bath, he attained an age far beyond that of the ordinary duration.

34. In early youth he devoted himself to the study of eloquence, and obtained much success in this pursuit. He took great pains with his speeches that were to be addressed to the senate; always carefully writing them beforehand, though he was by no means deficient in a natural fluency of speech; but he feared that if he trusted to his extempore powers, he should say more or less than was proper. His tone of voice was a sweet and peculiar one, which he had learned from a master who had diligently instructed him in the art of delivery.

Among his amusements was that of composition both in prose and verse. His style was considered to be a good one, and free from all that could offend the ear of the critic. He laboured especially to obtain ease and simplicity in writing, considering that one of the chief excellencies of a literary work was its freedom from all extravagance of diction and affectation of manner.

35. This Emperor seems to have been the first person who devised a method of communication, which bears some analogy to our postal regulations. To obtain the speedier intelligence of what passed in the provinces, he at first placed young men at moderate distances along the military roads, and afterwards vehicles, to bring him letters. In the sealing of these, or of other instruments, he at one time used the figure of a Sphinx; subsequently the head of Alexander the Great, and at last his own, engraven by the hand of Dioscorides, which the succeeding princes

likewise continued to make use of. He was extremely precise in the dating of his letters, putting down exactly the time of day or night at which they were dispatched.

36. With regard to the prevailing prejudice in favour of the truth of portents, omens, and dreams, Augustus betrayed a mind fully possessed with the delusions of the age in which he lived. His terror on such occasions sometimes showed itself in a way that was ridiculous. In a storm of thunder and lightning he would retire into a vault under ground; and he usually carried about with him a seal skin—an article supposed to be a means of preservation at such times. Upon his own dreams, and those of his friends, he laid much stress; and it was believed that he saved himself at the battle of Philippi by having left his tent at the instance of a friend, who had dreamt that his life would be there unsafe. On a certain day of the year, he publicly begged an alms of the people, holding out his hand as a supplicant, with the idea of thus being secured from some calamity with which one of his own dreams had threatened him.

Certain signs and omens he regarded as infallible; if in the morning his shoe was put on wrong, or the left instead of the right, it was always interpreted as a dismal presage; and when he set out on a journey by sea or land, a misty rain was held to be a good sign of a speedy and fortunate return.

37. From the whole of this view of the reign and conduct of Augustus, it will appear that the superiority which he obtained in his age and country was owing not so much to extraordinary qualities of mind or body, as to his caution, moderation, and artful policy. He understood well the spirit and the temper of the times in which he lived; and in exactly suiting himself to these consisted his secret of governing mankind. Profiting at first by his station and position, then by his fears, and lastly by the ascendancy which victory over his rivals had given him, he secured possession of the imperial authority, still preserving among the Romans (as long as he lived) the image at least of civil liberty and of good government.

SUMMARY OF ERA THE SECOND.

1. The peculiarity of this era.—2. The birth of Octavius.—3. The Triumvirate and the battle of Philippi.—4. The rise of Octavius.—5. He dissolves his connection with Lepidus and Marc Antony.—Conquers Egypt, and makes it a Roman province.—6. The wars of Octavius.—7. Extent of the Roman Empire at this time.—8. Augustus makes triumphal processions after his victories.—9. A peaceful sovereign.—10. He shuts the Temple of Janus three times in his reign.—11. Proposes to resign his authority as Emperor, but afterwards consents to hold it for a limited period.—12. The Emperor's power.—13. Augustus shows great humility, and a dislike of pompous titles; illustrations of his general conduct.—14. He makes many beneficial regulations.—15. He reforms the senate.—16. Puts restrictions on attendance at the public spectacles.—17. Evidences of his generosity of disposition.—18. The conduct of Augustus towards foreign powers.—19. He visits the eastern provinces; anecdote of the voluntary immolation of a Brahmin in the presence of his court.—20. The Emperor effects great improvements in the city; deposits immense wealth in the Capitol.—21. His zeal for the religion of his country; gifts to the Jewish temple; the policy of his government; his regard for the memory of distinguished Romans. —22. His opinion of the conduct of a good general.—23. His moral character stained with the vices of his age; an account of his family; his nephew Marcellus; his daughter Julia, &c.—24. His love of the society of men of genius; Virgil and Horace his companions.—25. Virgil's treatment by the Emperor, and by the Roman people.—26. The Emperor's conduct towards Cicero and Ovid an exception.—27. The peaceful death of Augustus.—28. Omens supposed to have attended his birth and death.—29. Augustus a great benefactor to the state.—30. His last will; his diary.—31. His residences; his love of what was beautiful and curious.—32. His mode of living; his entertainments; diet and division of his time.—33. Description of

the Emperor's person and bodily constitution.—34. His study and practice of elocution; his attention to literary composition.—35. His arrangements for the conveyance of letters; his seals, &c.—36. His fears of lightning, and superstition respecting dreams, &c.; his attention to omens.—37. General estimate of the character of Augustus—of the causes of his success as Emperor.

ERA THE THIRD.

THE LIFE OF TITUS VESPASIAN.

THE ROMAN POWER TRIUMPHANT IN JUDEA, AND THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.

1. TITUS VESPASIAN, as he is commonly called, was the tenth Roman Emperor, or the ninth reckoning from Augustus. His proper name, or the name which he bears in Roman history, when written at full length, was Titus Flavius Vespasianus Augustus. The first of these titles marked the individual, being equivalent to our Christian name; the second denoted the race from which he descended, or the Flavii; the third, the particular family belonging to that race, or the Vespasians; the last was a mere honorary title, derived from the first Emperor to whom it was given.

2. The history of the Emperors who immediately succeeded Augustus presents but few bright spots, upon which the memory could wish to dwell. They were, for the most part, some of the worst characters which have disgraced the annals of Rome. Tiberius, upon whom the imperial mantle fell (A.D. 14) after the decease of Augustus, left a name polluted by vices and cruelties of the most abominable kind. Another monster followed him, distinguished by the nickname of Caligula (A.D. 37), whose brief reign of four years presents a scene of profligacy, madness, and atrocious crimes, of which the world has had but few such examples. After him succeeded Claudius (A.D. 41), whose reign of about fourteen years, was chiefly memorable for the conquest of a large portion of Britain (A.D. 43), and

the captivity of the noble British chieftain Caractacus. In his cruelty, and other enormities, he manifested the disposition of a stern tyrant, whose only redeeming virtue was that of liberating Caractacus, after he had led him in triumph through the streets of Rome (A.D. 51). In Nero, the sixth of the Cæsars (A.D. 54), all the vices of preceding Emperors displayed themselves by turns; and although, like some of these, he began his reign with a show of virtue, he afterwards revelled in crimes that might have been thought suitable to a demon rather than a man. During nearly eighteen years the empire groaned under his yoke, a melancholy spectacle of degeneracy in every virtue. He was the last who bore the family name of Cæsar; and the year after his death (A.D. 68), Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, each obtaining the empire by the power of a licentious soldiery, and becoming after a few months its unhappy victim, exhibited a mockery of the imperial majesty and greatness. Sweeping hastily over this period of fifty years from the death of Augustus, which brings us to A.D. 69, we arrive at a new and important era, the reign of Titus, who (with the exception of the son that bears his name) was, upon the whole, one of the best princes who inherited the power and dominion of the Cæsars.

3. At the time that Claudius invaded Britain, Titus Vespasian was lieutenant-general of a legion in Germany, where he obtained much reputation as a warrior, but was recalled from thence to take a part in the victories of that Emperor in this island. Here he was distinguished in no less than thirty engagements, taking, among other conquests, the isle of Wight. In the reign of Nero he also maintained his military fame, by being commissioned to reduce the province of Judea, which had revolted from the Roman government (A.D. 66). But the civil war raised for a short time by Vitellius, rendered it necessary for him to proceed to Egypt. Meanwhile his own army in Judea had acknowledged him as Emperor, and the legions in Egypt soon following this example, his claim to the empire was universally admitted on the death of his only opponent (A.D. 69).

4. The year following was the era of an occurrence next in importance to that which signalized in the reign of Augustus. The siege and destruction of Jerusalem were

events which fulfilled the truth of sacred prophecy, and awfully avenged the death of Jesus Christ, whose name has given an everlasting remembrance to that once-hallowed city.

5. Titus, the son of the great military hero whose election to the imperial power has just been noticed, was the principal actor in this terrible scene, and for this reason it is chiefly, that we shall now follow the fortunes of so remarkable a man, and give a sketch of his character and conduct.

6. As soon as the father of Titus was confirmed in the empire, his first great enterprise was to renew the war in Judea, that had been interrupted by the civil wars of the empire. For this purpose he sent his son to take the command of the forces of the Romans in that country (A.D. 70). Finding that the city of Jerusalem was too strongly fortified on every side to yield at once to their assaults, he resolved to surround it with a wall, that he might reduce the Jews by famine, and cut off all possibility of their escape. This work, by the diligence and emulation of his soldiers, he executed in a few days. The siege, however, would have been prolonged for an uncertain period, had not the folly and madness of the besieged soon rendered them an easy prey to the conqueror. Within the city, rival factions contended fiercely with one another, and weakened the power of resistance by their infatuated counsels; by their mutual slaughters; by burning provisions that would have sufficed for many years, and by fatally deserting those strongholds which could never have been taken by force. Titus himself was so strongly convinced of this, that he is said to have expressed himself to his friends in these words:—"God is on our side; God it is who has pulled the Jews out of these strongholds, for what could the hands of men or machines do against these towers?"

7. In the month of April (A.D. 70) the siege of Jerusalem began during the season of the Passover; and on the tenth day of Ab, or our August, the Temple and a great part of the city was destroyed, at a time when, as it is computed, there were not less than two millions and seven hundred thousand human beings inclosed within its walls; of whom eleven hundred thousand perished in the siege alone, and ninety thousand were led away captives. All this was

accomplished by an army of about sixty thousand men, a force so manifestly unequal to that of the Jews, that Titus might well have been astonished at his own success, and justly ascribe it to nothing less than a miraculous interposition in his favour*.

8. The capture of Jerusalem forms the most terrific tale which the records of history unfold. Yet everything that was done or suffered there, so accurately agrees with what was prophesied of it, just forty years before, by the Saviour of mankind, that we shall here select a few passages from Josephus, the Jewish historian, who was himself an eye-witness of this fearful scene. These will give the reader a lively idea of the horrors which attended this event, and serve to confirm the divine character of Him who predicted its doom, as he looked down upon the fated city from the Mount of Olives†.

"Hunger now became stronger than all other passions. Children snatched the morsel their parents were eating out of their very mouths. Wives did the same towards their husbands; and, what was still more pitiable, mothers treated their infants with similar cruelty, denying even the maternal fountain to their dearest offspring, while pining away in their hands. But what little food they had was not in their power to conceal, for plunderers were around them, and wherever these saw a house shut up, they suspected it was a sign of food within, and forthwith they burst open the doors, snatching from their jaws the morsels of food they were in the act of swallowing. Old men who would not give up their food were beaten, and women were dragged about by the hair, if they attempted to hide what was in their possession. There was no commiseration for age or infancy. They lifted up the children from the ground, with the morsels they held fast, and dashed them down again upon the floor.

9. "But if any had anticipated such violence, and swallowed the food hastily before the plunderers could break in,

* The Jewish Temple is said by Josephus to have been burnt in the same month, and on the same day of the month, as it was 657 years before by Nebuchadnezzar (B.C. 587). It should be noticed, however, that the upper part of the city, or Mount Zion, was not taken till the 7th of the following month, or our September.

† Luke xix. 41–44.

they were treated in the most inhuman manner, as if they had not been the injured party. Dreadful kinds of torments were also invented, for the purpose of discovering whether they had eaten food or not.

"But when all hope of escaping was now cut off, and they could no longer go out of the city, then the famine grew still more terrible, and devoured the people by whole houses and families. The chambers of the houses were full of dying women and children, and the lanes with the dead bodies of the aged. Children and young men wandered about the market-place like ghosts, and fell down and expired wherever the sickness seized them. Many died as they were burying others, and some hastened to the sepulchre before the fatal hour came. They all died with their eyes fixed upon the temple. At first the multitudes who thus perished were buried at the public expense when their carcases became offensive; but afterwards, when there was no means of burying them, they were thrown over the wall of the city, into the trenches surrounding it. . . . . When Titus, on going his rounds along the deep valleys that encompassed the city, saw them full of dead bodies, he gave a groan, and spreading out his hands to heaven, called God to witness that this was not his doing."

10. But worse still than this, is a scene which the same historian describes of a woman who fed upon her own infant:—"There was one Mary, the daughter of Eleazar, illustrious for her family and riches. She, having been stript and plundered of all her substance and provisions by the Jewish soldiers, from necessity and madness killed her own sucking-child, and having boiled him, devoured half of him, and covering up the rest, preserved it for another time. The soldiers soon came, allured by the smell of victuals, and threatened to kill her immediately, if she would not produce what she had dressed. But she replied that she had reserved a good part for them, and uncovered the relics of her child. Dread and astonishment seized them, and they stood stupified at the sight. 'But this,' said she, 'is my own son, and this is my work; eat, for even I have eaten. Be not you more tender than a woman, nor more compassionate than a mother! but if you have a religious abhorrence of my victim, I truly have eaten half, and let the rest remain for me.' They went away trembling, fearful to do

this one thing, and with reluctance left this food for the mother. The whole city was struck with horror at this wickedness, and they were pronounced happy who died before they had seen or heard of such dreadful deeds."

11. It was not the wish of the Roman general, when he entered the city, that the Jewish Temple should be destroyed. The building was one of so much grandeur, splendour, and beauty, that the eye of the conqueror was delighted at beholding it; and he determined to preserve it, as a proud monument of the victory and glory of the Roman empire. To the Jews who had fortified themselves within it, he protested that he desired to preserve it, even if they were unwilling to do so. He also expressed a similar desire to spare the city too, and sent Josephus and other Jews again and again to their countrymen, to persuade them to surrender. But their obstinacy of resistance was such as no offers of mercy could subdue. The Jews themselves first set fire to the porticoes of the temple. But its final destruction was the work of the Romans. One of the soldiers, neither waiting for the word of command, nor fearing to perpetrate such an attempt, and perhaps ignorant of the express orders of Titus, or urged, as Josephus says, "by a divine impulse," threw a burning brand in at the golden window, and thereby set fire to the inner buildings of the temple. Titus ran immediately towards the place, and commanded the soldiers to extinguish the flame. But neither exhortations nor threatenings restrained their violence. They either could not, or would not hear; and those behind encouraged those before, to set fire to the sacred edifice. Titus was so much in earnest to stop the progress of the flames, that he ordered certain of the soldiers to be punished for disobeying him. But their anger and hatred of the Jews, and a kind of warlike vehement fury, overcame their reverence for the general, and their dread of disobeying his commands. Another soldier set fire to the doors; and thus, at last, the temple was burnt against the will of Titus. The historian thus completes the picture of the destruction of this building:—

12. "While the sacred edifice was on fire, everything was plundered that came to hand, and ten thousand of those that were caught, were slain; children, and old men, and priests, all in the same manner. The flame was carried far

and wide, and added its sound to the groans of those who had fallen in the slaughter; and because the hill (where the temple stood) was high and the works at the temple were very great, the whole city might have seemed on fire. There was heard at once the exulting shout of the Roman legions, as they marched on in a body, and the wailing of those who were now surrounded by conflagration and the sword. When the people beheld the Holy House in flames, they exerted their utmost strength, and broke out into fresh groans and outcries. Perea echoed back the sound, and the mountains about the city; yet, the misery itself was more terrible than this uproar and confusion. One would have thought the very hill on which the temple stood was burning up from its roots, so full was it of fire on all sides; but the blood was larger even in quantity than the fire, and the slain more in number than the slayers, for the ground was nowhere visible, the soldiers marching over heaps of dead bodies as they ran upon such as fled from them. As for the priests, some of them plucked up from the Holy House the spikes that were upon it, with their bases, and shot them at the Romans instead of darts. But they gained nothing by so doing; and as the fire burst out upon them, they retired to the wall, that was eight cubits broad, and there they awaited their destruction, two of them at last throwing themselves down headlong into the fire; some being burnt in the cloisters around, and none of them escaping with his life."

13. The valour and military talents displayed by Titus in the siege of Jerusalem, procured for him the highest degree of applause. In his last assault upon the city, he is said to have slain seven of the men who defended it, with just so many arrows from his own hand, and it was considered a remarkable omen, that he took the city upon his daughter's birthday. Upon this occasion, the soldiers were so much impressed with admiration and regard for him, that they unanimously saluted him by the title of Emperor—a dangerous piece of flattery, and which his enemies took advantage of to raise a suspicion that he purposed to rebel against his father. To obviate, therefore, all misconstruction of his conduct, he hastened rapidly to Rome without his legions, and presenting himself unexpectedly in the presence of the Emperor, as if to reprove

his accusers, saluted him with the words, "I am come, father, I am come."

14. From this time he constantly acted as a partner with his father, in the government, and shared with him all the honours of the state. He officiated constantly as his deputy and assistant, administering the functions of a ruler, with vigour, and sometimes with severity. In the triumph which was decreed him for his victories, the father and the son were seen together dividing the honours of it; and on all occasions there was displayed to the court, and to the people, the same rare example of paternal regard, and of filial obedience.

15. One circumstance connected with the victory over the Jews, obtained by the Roman people in the person of Titus Vespasian, is too important and singular to be forgotten. It was customary among the Romans on some particular occasions, to commemorate their triumphs over a fallen nation, by erecting monuments which were intended to signalize the event, and to hand down the remembrance of it to future generations. Of these, the Triumphal Arch of Titus remains to this day, and may be seen standing in the Via Sacra, which commenced at the Great Circus and extended as far as the Capitol. The sceptical traveller may here be reminded of the facts to which the Scripture records bear faithful witness. Here he may see the sides of the archway still decorated with sculptures, somewhat defaced, it is true, but plainly telling their melancholy tale. On one side is pourtrayed the triumphal entry into Rome; and on the opposite the procession of captive Jews, with "staves in their hands," bearing the spoils of Jerusalem; the golden candlestick, with its seven branches; the golden table, with the censer; the silver trumpets, with other articles of the temple furniture. This monument is not the only one which attests how important this conquest was considered at that time, in the eyes of the Romans. Coins are still extant, some of which have been dug up even in this country, having on one side the head of Vespasian, on the other a female figure, weeping. On some of these curious and valuable relics, the woman is represented seated beneath a palm tree, and beside her are piled up trophies of war, as if literally fulfilling the language of the prophets; "She being desolate, shall sit upon the

ground. How is she become a widow? She that was great among the nations, a princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary?" (Lam. i. 1.)

16. The miseries which fell upon the Jews were far from being terminated, when the siege of Jerusalem was at an end. Shame and sorrow, and the odium of a fallen nation, besides other punishments, were awaiting them, in all countries whither they were carried away captive. Simon, the son of Giora, the chief captive, and most daring of the rebels, was transported to Rome to adorn the triumph of Titus (A.D. 71). During this ceremony, according to custom, he was put to death as soon as the victor had ascended to the Capitol. Jonathan, the leader of the Sicarii, who, with Simon and John, had exercised a tyranny in Jerusalem, which kept the city in almost as much terror as the siege itself, was detected in a conspiracy after he had been brought to Rome, and was first scourged, and then burnt alive. John, the companion of Simon in his flight, was taken with him, and kept a perpetual prisoner. Titus, among his other great undertakings, finished the Coliseum, which had been begun by his father Vespasian. In this magnificent structure, which is an astonishing one, even in its ruins, Titus employed 12,000 of his Jewish captives.

17. Titus was not disposed to show much mercy to his captives. He caused 2000 of them to be slaughtered by beasts, and to lose their lives in the gladiatorial combats, or by fire at Cæsarea Philippi, where he went soon after the termination of the war, to celebrate the birthday of his father and brother. A great number he also put to death by similar modes of punishment, at Berytus, on a festive occasion; and the remark of Josephus on these transactions, is, "that though the Jews were thus consumed in a thousand ways, yet it seemed after all to the Romans, much less than they deserved."

18. The furniture of the Jewish temple, which Titus carried away, after having used it to adorn his triumph, he appropriated to the uses of a pagan shrine dedicated to Peace, in which he placed them. But the Book of the Law and the purple veil of the Sanctuary were laid up among the stores of the Palatium*. (A.D. 75.)

* The spoils of the Jewish temple remained at Rome for more than 300 years, but were carried away by Genseric, king of the Vandals,

19. Whatever the severities were which Titus exercised towards a people who had forfeited all claim to his forbearance, by their obstinate and fierce resistance, his conduct, after he returned to Rome and was invested with the powers of empire, was virtuous and irreproachable. Some heavy charges of a moral nature lay against him before that period, which led the Romans to entertain an unfavourable opinion of his future career. But, although by his natural disposition he was prone to luxuries and excesses of every kind, yet with a degree of virtuous resolution almost unexampled in history, he had no sooner taken the reins of government than he became a model of temperance, humanity, and benevolence. He sent away from the city Queen Berenice, to whom he was fondly attached, because she was not his lawful wife; and dismissed from his society and from the public assemblies, all those who had been corrupters of the public morals.. In a word, so sudden a change was never known in any prince, from vice to virtue. It was thus that he won for himself a nobler diadem than that of empire—that empire over his own heart, and the hearts of others, which was seen in the title given him—"The love and delight of mankind."

20. His generosity of conduct was shown in a variety of actions. Anticipating the wants of the people by his bounty, he confirmed all the acts of former princes in their favour, by a general proclamation, not waiting to be petitioned on the subject. It was his constant practice to send away none without hopes, if they expressed a wish for a particular favour. And when his ministers insinuated that he would thus be promising more than he could perform, he nobly replied—"No person ought to go away sad, from an audience with his prince."

21. His benevolence and humanity were strikingly exem-

after he had sacked Rome (A.D. 455). From Carthage they were afterwards transported to Constantinople, by Belisarius, who removed them thither upon his conquest of Africa. Justinian then restored them again to Jerusalem, from whence they were taken by Chosroes, after the Persians had got possession of the Holy City, about the year 614. It is doubtful, however, if the ship in which they were embarked ever reached its destination. These spoils, it should be observed, were not the original articles in Solomon's temple, it having been plundered of them by Antiochus Epiphanes. But no doubt such articles were made according to the exact patterns of those first placed in the Jewish temple.

plified, during a period of much public calamity. In the great eruption of mount Vesuvius, which happened in his reign, many had perished, and left no heirs to their estates. These lands, therefore, he applied to support the repairs of such cities as had been injured by this accident. To provide for the loss sustained by a dreadful fire in the city, he made use of the ornaments of his own palaces, and declared that no one should be a loser by this calamity but himself. And for the relief of the people during a plague prevailing at this time, he took all the means that were in his power, offering sacrifices, comforting them by his proclamations, and supplying medicines, and every other kind of assistance that was necessary. By these and other methods, as well as by the discouragement of many evil practices, which had grown up under the licence of former reigns, he displayed not only that due concern for the public welfare and happiness which might be expected in a good prince, but also a regard for the safety of his people beyond what could have been hoped for, and which appeared nothing less than a truly paternal affection.

22. There seems to have been a gentleness in his nature that rendered him from this time averse to the shedding of human blood on any occasion, even where his own security was concerned. Having accepted the office of high priest, or Pontifex, for the purpose of preserving his hands thus undefiled, he faithfully adhered to his vow, not to put any man to death. Two men of patrician rank, being convicted of a conspiracy against him, he only advised them to desist, by saying, that "the sovereign power was disposed of by fate," and promising them that if they had anything else to desire, he would gratify them. Besides showing them other marks of his forgiveness, he sent to the mother of one of them at a distance, who was deeply concerned about her son, to assure her that he was safe. A similar feeling manifested itself towards his infamous brother Domitian, whom he knew to be concerned in plotting against him. He would not bring him to punishment, nor banish him from the court. But from his first accession to the sole empire, he constantly declared him his partner in it, and promised him that he should be his successor. Sometimes in private he besought him, with tears, to make him a return of similar affection.

23. Few princes have had so profound a sense of the value of their time, in relation to works of beneficence, as Titus Vespasian. Once, while he was at supper, reflecting that he had spent the day without having done any act of kindness to his subjects, he uttered that memorable and justly-admired saying,—"Oh, friends, I have lost a day."

24. It would have been well for the Roman people, if a life so truly valuable had been extended to a long period; for it is probable that his authority and example would have had the most beneficial influence upon the manners of the age. But it was otherwise determined by that power which determines the destiny of sovereigns and of empires. Like other warriors, whose arms have been employed against the Jews, Titus was doomed to be taken off by a premature death, after a reign of little more than two years, though he had been a partner with his father in the government for nearly nine years before. As he was retiring to his father's house, in the country of the Sabines, he was seized with a violent fever—a fate which he had apprehended, when he left Rome, in consequence of two disastrous omens—the escape of a victim from the altar, and a noise of loud thunder heard during a cloudless sky. Titus therefore at once believed his disease to be mortal; and, drawing aside the curtains of his chair, lamented the severity of the fate which was about to deprive him of life, though he declared himself conscious of no action of his life but one, that he had reason to repent of. What this action was, has never been explained, and it would be vain to conjecture. He died, not without a suspicion of his brother Domitian having been concerned in his death, as he was placed by his orders, during his last agony, in a vessel full of snow, where he expired (A.D. 81). After the news of his death had reached Rome, there was a general lamentation, every one mourning for him as for the loss of some near relation; and the senate having assembled, heaped upon his name the highest praises and honours.

25. The only two remarkable writers of the period of Vespasian and his son Titus, were Josephus and Pliny. The first of these is well known by his history of the Antiquities of the Jews, and of the Jewish war, written first in his native or Syriac language, and afterwards by himself translated into Greek. The latter of these works so gra-

tified Titus, that he was pleased to authenticate it, or to give his testimony to the truth of it, by affixing to it his own signature, and placing it in one of the public libraries of Rome (A.D. 80). Josephus attended Titus throughout the Jewish war, having fallen into his hands as a prisoner after the siege of Jotapata, where he displayed his abilities by enabling the city to hold out for forty-seven days against the efforts of Vespasian and his son; an event which took place at the breaking out of the rebellion in Judea. On this occasion, the life of the historian, which Providence seems to have watched over, for the purpose of handing down to us the knowledge of events that so strongly confirm the truth of our religion, was preserved in a most singular manner. He and forty of his countrymen took refuge, after Jotapata was taken, in a cave; and when his companions were determined to kill him and themselves, rather than fall into the hands of the Romans, he prevailed with them to draw lots who should be killed, one after the other; and at last he was thus left with only a single companion, whom he persuaded to surrender with himself to Vespasian (A.D. 67).

26. The other writer of this reign, whose name is deservedly famous, was Pliny, surnamed the elder. His work on Natural History is a collection of all the principal facts that were then known on this interesting science. It consists of 37 books, and is a monument of the industry and genius of the author, exceedingly valuable to all those who would understand the degree of knowledge which the ancients possessed of natural philosophy. Pliny was distinguished early by his military talents in the German war, and was afterwards governor of Spain. He lost his life during the eruption of mount Vesuvius, to which reference has been made (A.D. 79). He was at this time with the fleet under his command, at Misenum; but with the view of assisting those who were in peril nearer the mountain, he landed at a place where he might the better effect this benevolent design. He had not, however, fully appreciated the danger, no eruption of Vesuvius having taken place for several centuries before. After lingering for a few hours at the house of his friend Pomponianus, at Stabia, he was compelled to retire again towards the sea, by the showers of falling stones and ashes, which threatened him and his party with destruction. There,

as the narrative tells us, they waited to put to sea, but found the waves running extremely high and boisterous; upon which Pliny threw himself down upon a cloth which was spread for him. But presently the flames from the mountain, and a strong smell of sulphur, dispersed some of his party, and obliged him to rise. He raised himself up with the assistance of two of his servants, but almost instantly fell down insensible, being suffocated by some impure and noxious vapours which he was the less able to resist, having always had weak lungs, and a difficulty of breathing. The third day after his death, his body was found entire, and without any marks of violence upon it, exactly in the same posture as he fell, and looking more like a man asleep than dead.

27. Such are nearly the words in which this melancholy accident is described by the younger Pliny, who was at this time dwelling at Misenum, and who wrote the account of his uncle's death. He has given a detailed account in one of his letters of all the circumstances attending this dreadful eruption of Vesuvius, which, among its other fearful ravages, overwhelmed the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii, and hid them from the eye of man for a period of more than 1500 years.

SUMMARY OF ERA THE THIRD.

1. Name and family of the Vespasians.—2. Sketch of the Emperors who succeeded Augustus to the time of Vespasian.—3. Vespasian's history as a general before he obtains the empire.—4. The importance of this era.—5. Titus, the son of Vespasian; his connection with this era.—6. He is sent by his father to carry on the Jewish war, and besieges Jerusalem.—7. Circumstances attending its siege and capture.—8. The account Josephus gives us of this event.—9. The subject continued.—10. The dreadful story of Eleazar's daughter.—11. Titus desires to save the temple; his wishes are prevented.—12. The burning of the sacred edifice; description of it by Josephus.—13. The military talents and valour of Titus; he returns to Rome.—14. Takes a share in the government of the empire.—15. Reference to the arch of Vespasian at Rome, and other monuments of the conquest of Judea.—16. The miseries which fell upon the Jews; the death of their chief leaders; Jonathan and John at Rome.—17. The treatment of the Jewish captives. —18. The furniture of the temple, and its subsequent history.—19. The virtues of Titus after he became sole Emperor.—20. His generosity exemplified.—21. His humanity.—22. His gentleness and forbearance.—23. His famous saying.—24. The circumstance of his premature death; dies greatly lamented.—25. The two remarkable writers of his age; Josephus and his history.—26. The elder Pliny; his death, in the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. —27. Pompeii and Herculaneum destroyed at this time.

ERA THE FOURTH.

THE LIFE OF ANTONINUS PIUS.

THE ANTONINES, AND THE FIRST TOLERATION OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

1. From the death of Titus Vespasian to the era which we are now to notice, there was an interval of fifty-seven years (A.D. 81-138). During this time, the empire of Rome was governed in succession, by four rulers: Domitian, Nerva, Trajan, and Hadrian. Of these, the first continued to disgrace the memory of his father and brother for fifteen years, and was then put to death by a conspiracy, which raised Nerva to the situation of Emperor (A.D. 96). His feeble old age was unable to administer the affairs of empire with the vigour that was necessary after the long tyranny of Domitian, and he was a prince of mild character, unsuited to the people over whom he had to preside. He bequeathed the burden of power, after a short reign of two years, to Trajan (A.D. 98), who had already been an experienced soldier, and for about nineteen years after was employed in extending the conquests of Rome among the Dacians, and in the east even as far as the borders of Judea. His victories were, however, of little value, and the yoke which he imposed upon many barbarous nations, was speedily thrown off. This martial and ambitious emperor was succeeded at his death by Hadrian (A.D. 117), who held the office for twenty-one years, and whose life was a scene of constant bustle and activity, as a soldier and a statesman. He was a great traveller, and there was scarcely any part of the empire which he did not visit and inspect in person; marching frequently bare-headed and on foot, and traversing

the plains of Egypt, and the snows of Caledonia. He signalized himself by raising a wall of earth-work, eighty miles long, the remains of which may still be traced from Carlisle towards Newcastle (A.D. 121). But his most remarkable performance was the building a new city, which he called Ælia, on the ruins of Jerusalem (A.D. 132); and it is said that he even erected statues to Jupiter and Venus, on mount Calvary. In consequence of these, and other indignities, the Jews took up arms, and, repossessing themselves of the city, made a vigorous defence. Hadrian at length defeated them, burning the city, destroying a prodigious number of the rebels, and sending the rest into banishment; and thus the desolation of Judea was now rendered still more complete than in the wars of Vespasian.

2. At his death (A.D. 138), he adopted as his heir Antoninus Titus, distinguished afterwards by the epithet Pius. This appointment was with a condition, that he should associate with him in the government Marcus Aurelius. The first was a venerable senator now fifty years old, and the latter a youth of about seventeen. The two Antonines, as they are called, governed the Roman world with almost unexampled virtue; and it has been observed that their united reigns were probably the only period of history, in which the happiness of a great people was the sole object of government. This observation is to be applied more particularly to the reign of the first of these emperors. With respect to the second, it cannot be considered as strictly true, he having treated a considerable portion of his subjects with great severity, injustice, and inhumanity. But as to the first no exception can be made.

3. Titus Antoninus Pius has been justly denominated a second Numa. The same love of religion, justice, and peace was the distinguishing characteristic of both princes. But the situation of the latter, opened a much larger field for the exercise of those virtues. Numa could only prevent a few neighbouring villages from plundering each other's harvests. Antoninus diffused order and tranquillity over the greatest part of the civilized world. His reign is marked by the rare advantage of furnishing very few materials for history, which, it has been well observed, is indeed "little more than a register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind." "In private life he was an

amiable, as well as a good man. The native simplicity of his virtue, was a stranger to vanity or affectation. He enjoyed with moderation the conveniences of his fortune, and the innocent pleasures of society; and the benevolence of his soul displayed itself in a cheerful serenity of temper." This is the brief description which Gibbon gives us of the character of this emperor, and his reign may therefore be regarded as one of the most striking eras in the history of Rome.

4. But the most remarkable feature of it, compared with that of former emperors, is the instance it offers of a Pagan sovereign tolerating Christianity. The conduct of Antoninus in this respect will be better understood, if we here give a brief sketch of the persecutions, to which Christians had been exposed in the preceding reigns. In the reign of Nero, the persecuting spirit of Rome first displayed itself, by inflicting upon them the most cruel punishments. The voice of rumour accused that tyrant of setting fire to Rome, and to divert the suspicion from himself to a party for whom there would be likely to be found no pity, he accused the Christians of this crime. On this occasion, the fierceness and bigotry of the Jewish nation were believed, by the ignorance of the Roman people to belong to the new sect who sprung from Judea. No mercy was therefore shown them; "Multitudes of them were seized and tortured, and their torments were embittered by insult and derision. Some were nailed on crosses; others sewn up in the skins of wild beasts, and exposed to the fury of dogs; others again, smeared over with combustible materials, were used as torches to illuminate the darkness of the night. The gardens of Nero were destined for the melancholy spectacle, which was accompanied with a horse race, and honoured with the presence of the Emperor, in the dress and attitude of a charioteer (A.D. 64)."

5. The reign of Domitian, who was naturally of a cruel disposition, renewed in some degree the horrors of Nero's persecution (A.D. 92). He put to death many persons under the absurd charge of atheism, because they refused to worship the Pagan gods. Trajan was the third emperor who is to be included in the list of persecuting tyrants. Among the victims of his cruelty, was the venerable Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, whom he ordered to be thrown to

the wild beasts, for the entertainment of the people in the Roman amphiteatre (A.D. 107). There is extant in the epistles of the younger Pliny, a correspondence which passed between himself and the Emperor, on the subject of punishing those who were avowedly Christians. In these letters Pliny bears witness to the virtuous principles professed by the sufferers, and to the numbers of those who professed what he calls a debasing and excessive superstition. He informs the Emperor that he had examined some of the females by torture, and had so vigorously exerted himself to suppress the profession of this religion that the temples, before almost left desolate, were again beginning to be frequented. In his reply to this epistle the Emperor commends his zeal, and orders that all who were convicted of the crime of being Christians should be punished with death, giving him only one caution, that it was inconsistent with the maxims of his government, to attend in any case to anonymous accusations (A.D. 102.)

6. Such was the cruel condition to which Christianity was exposed at this period. To profess this religion was made a capital crime, and the effect of such a law was to produce the severest cruelties, wherever the temper of the magistrate, or the bigotry of the people, was disposed to put in practice the law of the empire.

7. Under Hadrian, the next emperor, the persecution of Christians still continued with unabated severity, during the former part of his reign (A.D. 126). Hadrian, however, does not appear to have issued any express edicts at this time on the subject, and probably was too much occupied to have paid any great attention to the matter, until he was called upon to do so by Serenius Granianus, a proconsul of Asia, where the persecution chiefly raged (A.D. 124). He wrote to the Emperor, that it seemed to him unreasonable, that the Christians should be put to death, merely to gratify the clamours of the people, without trial, and without any crime proved against them. The reply of the Emperor admitted the justice of the argument, and decided that in future, open charges should be made against those who were accused of Christianity, and that they should not be punished upon a mere accusation without proof (A.D. 124).

8. The misery to which those accused of being Christians were exposed, and those also, who on examination were

found to be so, may be judged of by facts of this kind. Many were probably suffering from the supposed guilt of being Christians, who had now an opportunity of freeing themselves from the charge, by demanding from their accusers a legal trial before punishment. Hypocrisy might thus shield itself in some cases, and in others a malicious enemy could no longer gain an advantage by calumny. But the sincere and zealous professor of the faith of Christ was still liable to all the evils that would inevitably follow his legal conviction, and if he refused to offer incense on the altar of the Pagan deities, or to comply with any of the prescribed ceremonies, there was no alternative but that of suffering martyrdom, in any of the forms which were thought most capable of subduing the constancy of the sufferer, or of making him an example of terror to the community.

9. This was the state in which the laws had placed the professor of Christianity, at the time when Antoninus Pius succeeded to the empire. To his honour it is recorded, that he was not only guiltless in his own person of shedding Christian blood, but by his wise and salutary regulations he soon put a stop to persecution throughout the empire. The temper of the monarch might perhaps naturally have inclined him to this course, for it was his well-known maxim, that he preferred the life and preservation of one citizen, to the death of a hundred enemies. There is reason, however, to believe that the Emperor was guided in his conduct towards the Christians, by other circumstances besides the mere dictates of humanity. One of these may be found in the fact, that Justin Martyr had presented to him his first apology on behalf of the Christians and their doctrines. This great man had been a Greek philosopher, of a very inquisitive turn of mind, who, acquainting himself first with the doctrines of the Stoics, and with those professed by the followers of Pythagoras, became afterwards a disciple of Plato. Of his conversion to Christianity, and his reasons for it, he has left us an account in his celebrated dialogue with Trypho, the Jew. Shortly after the accession of Antoninus to the empire (or about 140 A.D.), he determined to avow himself as the defender of the truth and purity of the Christian faith, and the resolute assertor of its superiority to every other system of

religion. This is the substance of the work called his first apology. As Justin still wore the dress of a philosopher, and as all such were treated with great respect by the Emperor, there is reason to believe that the statements of such a man might have had considerable influence on his conduct, with regard to so large and respectable a portion of his subjects as now openly professed themselves Christians.

10. Besides the arguments of the philosopher, Antoninus might have given due weight to the remonstrances addressed to him by the Christians who dwelt in Asia, and who seem to have been much exposed to the consequences of a foolish superstition, which a mind like that of the Emperor's must at once have seen through, and treated with the contempt it deserved. Earthquakes, it seems, had lately happened, and the terrified Pagans ascribed them to the vengeance of heaven, thus displaying itself against the sect called Christians, "and everywhere spoken against." That the Emperor was wise enough to view this accusation as one altogether too silly and groundless even for a wise Pagan to entertain, is evident from the edict which he ordered to be sent to the council of Asia on this subject. The testimony thus rendered to the general conduct of the Christians at this period, is so important that we shall here quote it nearly at full length.

11. The Emperor wrote as follows:—"It much more concerns the gods than you to punish those who refuse to worship them. You harass and vex the Christians, and accuse them of Atheism and other crimes which you can by no means prove. To them it appears an advantage to die for their religion, and they gain their point, while they throw away their lives, rather than comply with your injunctions. As to the earthquakes which have happened in past times, or lately, is it not proper to remind you of your own despondency, when they occur, and to desire you to compare your spirit with theirs, and observe how serenely they confide in God? In such seasons you seem to be ignorant of the gods, and to neglect their worship. You live in practical ignorance of the supreme God himself, and you harass and persecute to death those who do worship him. Concerning these very persons, some of the provincial governments wrote to our divine

father Hadrian, to whom he returned this answer:—'That they should not be molested unless they appeared to attempt something against the Roman government.' Many also have signified to me their opinions concerning these men, to whom I have returned an answer agreeable to the maxims of my father. But if any person will still persist in accusing the Christians, merely as such, let the accused be acquitted, though he appear to be a Christian, and let the accuser be punished."

12. This edict was ordered (A.D. 141) to be set up in the common assembly of Asia, at Ephesus; and the Emperor wrote to the same effect to the Larisseans, the Thessalonians, the Athenians, and to all the Greeks. As the Emperor reigned twenty-three years, and this edict was probably published in the third year of his reign, the benefits of this toleration of the Christian faith must have been widely and sensibly felt during the comparatively long period in which Christianity was secured from oppression, and its followers were permitted to practise their religion, and to carry out its principles without disturbance. That it now rapidly increased its ranks, is rendered evident from the language which Tertullian uses, about forty years after the death of Antoninus. He writes thus to the Emperor Severus, respecting the number of the Christian proselytes:—"We are but of yesterday, and yet we have filled all your towns, cities, islands, castles, camps, courts, palaces, the senate, the forum. If we were to make a general secession from your dominions, you would be astonished at your solitude; we should leave you only your temples."*

13. The tolerant spirit of this Emperor, to whatever cause it was owing, cannot entirely be ascribed to the maxims of the philosophy or the religion which he professed; for Marcus Aurelius, who succeeded (A.D. 161), and who had jointly carried on the affairs of government with him, was animated by a different spirit, though he has the reputation of a just and beneficent prince, and was a professed philosopher of the sect of the Stoics. During nineteen years he persecuted the Christians with great severity, and one of the victims of his reign was Justin, styled the martyr, to whom we have before alluded, who suffered now at Rome (A.D. 164), unshielded by the philo-

* In his Apology, written about A.D. 201.

sophic garb, from the malice of an emperor who piqued himself upon belonging to this order of men, and receiving the surname which they bore. Another also of those who were distinguished in the ranks of the martyrs about this period (A.D. 167), was Polycarp, the venerable Bishop of Smyrna, who is supposed to have been ordained by St. John, to that office. At Lyons, and Vienne also, a number of both sexes perished by a variety of tortures (A.D. 178).

14. The conduct of Antoninus is therefore the more singular, offering as it does, so striking a contrast with those who ruled before him, and those who immediately followed after him. None of them seem to have profited by his example of forbearance towards the Christians, or to have understood that lesson above all others, which it was so well fitted to teach, the duty of a good sovereign, which is to protect the lives and civil liberties of all classes of his subjects, without reference to their religious creeds.

15. It is needless to dwell further upon the virtues of this Emperor, of whom it has been said by a Christian critic and historian, that scarcely a fault can be imputed to him in his private or public administration of affairs. His death, which took place in the 75th of his age (A.D. 161), was attended by no remarkable circumstances, except that of depriving the world of one of the rarest specimens which human nature has ever exhibited—a Roman emperor possessed of despotic power, and a heathen, adorned with the virtues that form a perfect statesman, philosopher, and sovereign.

SUMMARY OF ERA THE FOURTH.

1. Sketch of the Roman emperors from the death of Titus Vespasian to the time of Antoninus Pius.—Nerva—Trajan—Hadrian.—2. Antoninus reigns unitedly with Marcus Aurelius; Era, a remarkable one for the peace and happiness of the Roman empire.—3. Antoninus compared with Numa; his superiority; general excellence of his character.—4. His conduct especially remarkable for his toleration of Christianity; sketch of the persecution under Nero.—5. Under Domitian and Trajan; Pliny's letter to the Emperor, and Trajan's reply referred to.—6. The profession of Christianity a crime.—7. The persecution under Hadrian; his letter on the subject to the Proconsul of Asia.—8. Miseries which Christians were exposed to by this state of the law.—9. Antoninus stops the persecution; Justin and his apology.—10. The Christians of Asia send a petition to the Emperor against the injuries and calumnies to which they were exposed.—11. The Emperor's admirable reply.—12. The effects of the edict in their favour felt for a long period; Tertullian's testimony to the number of Christians in the empire.—13. The tolerant spirit of the empire not to be ascribed to philosophy or paganism; the conduct of Marcus Aurelius contrasted with it; Justin suffers as a martyr under his reign; Polycarp; the persecution in France.—14. The character of Antoninus a singular exception to that of the pagan emperors; a model of a good sovereign in this particular.—15. His death; his example one of extraordinary perfection in a Roman emperor.

ERA THE FIFTH.

THE LIFE OF DIOCLETIAN.

THE PARTITION OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE; AND THE LAST, OR TENTH GENERAL PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIANS.

1. "Like Augustus, Diocletian may be considered as the founder of a new empire."

Such is the observation of the historian of the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." This reign may therefore be selected as one of the most remarkable eras of the world's history. Lest the reader should entirely lose sight of the interval between this era and that of Marcus Aurelius, a sketch is here given of those who carried on the succession of the imperial power during so important a period. From the death of this Emperor (A.D. 180) to the accession of Diocletian (A.D. 284), 104 years intervened, which are to be distributed among at least twenty reigns, so that the average of these would scarcely exceed five years, a few of them being longer, but the greater part less.

2. After a peaceful, and, but for the persecution of his Christian subjects, a happy sway, Marcus Aurelius left the empire to Commodus, a son who inherited none of his father's virtues. His reign, though protracted to twelve years, was marked by follies of the most contemptible kind, and by vices which the pens of modern historians dare not describe. He was at last murdered by some of the inmates of the palace (A.D. 192), and Pertinax, an aged senator of consular rank, whose virtues formed a pleasing contrast with the character of his predecessor, was called to the empire. He reigned only a few months, falling a sacrifice to the Prætorian soldiers, the guards of the capital, who at

this time numbered about 10,000, and whose licentious fury was one symptom of the declining authority of the state.

3. Severus next assumed the station of Emperor (A.D. 193). His reign of 18 years was comparatively a long one, and rendered memorable by his visit to Britain, and by his dying at York, after he had built another wall near that of Hadrian. He is also said to have sent an army into Caledonia, to encounter Fingal, the hero of Ossian; but death saved the heroes of the north from their powerful enemy (A.D. 211). He left two sons to inherit his dominions. Caracalla, upon his brother Geta's assassination (A.D. 212), became sole possessor of the empire, but was murdered after a period of five years (A.D. 217).

4. Macrinus, his destroyer, held the empire for less than one year, when he was put to death by a mutiny of the Prætorian guards (A.D. 218).

Elegabalus, whose proper name was Bassianus, then succeeded to the supreme power. He was the grandson of Severus, and had been a priest of the sun at Emesa, in Phœnicia. His name, after he was Emperor, was derived from this circumstance, for the sun was adored in that city by this title, under the figure of a black conical stone, believed to have fallen from heaven*. He was an effeminate youth, who introduced into Rome the voluptuous idolatry of the Syrians. Luxury, gluttony, and profligacy in every form were the principal features of his reign. He abandoned himself to the grossest indulgences, endeavouring to subvert every law of nature and decency, and was deservedly cut off by the Prætorians after a reign of four years (A.D. 222).

5. The same military power raised to the empire Alexander Severus, another grandson of the family, bearing the latter name. He was a youth of singularly virtuous character; and recalled to mind the days of the Antonines. He fell a sacrifice (A.D. 235), after a thirteen years' reign, to a conspiracy raised against him by Maximin an old General of the empire, of gothic extraction. Of this brutal savage we are told that his stature was eight feet and a half in height, that he could drink in a day seven gallons of wine, eat thirty or forty pounds of flesh, and that his strength was in proportion far greater than that of ordinary men. It was this circumstance which, when he was a peasant youth, at-

* Probably an aerolite.

tracted the notice of the Emperor Severus. He overthrew successively seven of the strongest soldiers of the army in a wrestling match, and to this circumstance he owed his subsequent advancement. In the first year of his reign a revolt took place in Africa, in which two of the Gordians, a family then most illustrious in Rome, were raised to the dangerous dignity of the supreme authority against their own inclinations. The father and the son were both named Emperor (A.D. 236), and the son was a last relic of the best age of Roman sovereigns. But he fell in a skirmish with some Mauritanians near Carthage, and his father an old man whose reign had not exceeded 36 days, put an end to his life on hearing the news of this defeat.

6. Maximus and Balbinus, the first a soldier, and the second an experienced magistrate of the provinces, were now by the voice of the Senate raised to the situation of Emperors, Maximin having been already denounced as a public enemy. But a tumult ensuing among the Roman populace, another of the Gordian family was brought forward, the grandson of the elder who had already reigned. He was a boy of 13 years, and being produced to the people with the ornaments and title of Cæsar, the tumult was appeased. For about a year, in conjunction with Gordian, the two Emperors were permitted to exercise the authority. During this period, Maximin was advancing to Rome, to assert his claims at the head of an army. But while he was besieging Aquileia, he was deprived of life by a party of the Prætorian guards (A.D. 238). A few months afterwards, the two Emperors were put to death in the palace by an outbreak of the same military fury. The youthful Gordian now remained sole Emperor for about six years, and for the greater part of this time was under the influence of Misitheus a wise minister, whose counsels had no object but the glory of his sovereign and the happiness of the people. This young Emperor was cut off by a secret conspiracy, in his march to Antioch to oppose the Persians (A.D. 244). Philip, who headed this conspiracy, was an Arab by birth, and was raised by the votes of the soldiers to the vacant dignity; but fell in his turn, after a reign of five years, in a rebellion which broke out among the legions in Mæsia (A.D. 249).

7. Decius now succeeded, whose short reign of two years

is in some measure remarkable for a severe persecution (A.D. 250) which Christianity sustained throughout the whole of it, and for the first formidable invasion of the Goths, that people who afterwards broke the Roman power, sacked its capital, and reigned in Gaul, Spain and Italy. These barbarians, whose settlements were in the north of Europe, from Prussia to the Urkraine, had made an irruption into the province of Dacia, in the time of Philip, but were induced to retreat by the inhabitants of the city of Marcianopolis consenting to ransom their lives and property for a large sum of money. In the reign of Decius, they passed the Danube with an army of 70,000 Germans and Sarmatians. On this occasion the Roman soldiers failed to vindicate their ancient renown. For the first time, their Emperor was seen retreating before a crowd of half-armed barbarians. The pride of the Roman people and of their legions was humbled by the fatal results of a war, ending in the defeat and death of Decius (A.D. 251), and in the agreement of Gallus his successor to pay them an annual tribute, on condition of their remaining in their own territories.

8. There was now an interval of two years divided between Gallus and Æmilianus his rival, both of whom fell victims successively to the caprice of a tumultuous military power which ruled over all (A.D. 253). Valerian then ascended the throne of the Cæsars. He was at the head of the legions of Gaul and Germany, but he obtained the empire, not by the will of the populace, or by the clamours of the army, but by the unanimous consent of all classes. He was so universally revered, that it has been observed of him by an ancient writer, that the choice of mankind, if left at liberty to elect a master, would have fallen on Valerian. With the partiality of a father, however, he took for his associate a son who was unworthy of the office. Their joint government lasted about five years, and the sole administration of Gallienus about eight years. But the period was one of continued calamity, the empire at this time being attacked by the Franks, the Alemanni, the Goths, and the Persians. In a war conducted with the last of these nations (A.D. 259), Valerian fell into their power, by an act of treachery, and was doomed to spend the last year of his life in captivity. If we may credit one

account given of his misfortunes, they were such as monarchs have seldom experienced. Whenever Sapor, the king who had betrayed him, mounted his horse, it is said, he placed his foot on the neck of Valerian. We are also told that he was at length flayed alive, and that his skin being stuffed with straw, and formed into the likeness of his former figure, was preserved for several ages in the court of Persia.

9. When the whole power of empire was intrusted to Gallienus (A.D. 260), he proved himself a worthless tyrant. And at this season a number of usurpers started up in different parts of the empire, assuming a brief authority, and claiming the title of Emperors. They have been fancifully called the thirty tyrants, but their real number was nineteen, and they were thus designated, not that they were better or worse than the generality of usurpers, but because the word *Tyrant* was given by the ancients to all persons who illegally seized the supreme power. Several of those who on this occasion made pretensions to the empire, possessed great excellence and virtue, but not one of them died a natural death. Italy, Rome, and the Senate considered Gallienus alone as the lawful sovereign. He perished in a tumult of his own soldiers, by a dart thrown from some unknown hand (A.D. 268).

10. Claudius, an Illyrian general, succeeded him. He vindicated the Roman honour in a most signal victory obtained over the Goths, and thus acquired the noble appellation of the Gothic Claudius. After a short but brilliant reign of two years he expired (A.D. 270), of a fever at Sirmium, leaving the empire to Aurelian, one of his Generals. This reign lasted only four years and six months, but every part of it was distinguished by some striking achievement. This Emperor put an end to the Gothic war, chastised the Germans who had invaded Italy, recovered Gaul, Spain, and Britain out of the hands of Tetricus, a usurper of the imperial authority, and destroyed the proud monarchy of Zenobia, queen of Palmyra. He fell by the hands of a treacherous general who had been his friend (A.D. 275), and was followed in the empire by Tacitus, who, during his short reign of six months, laboured to restore the image of the ancient republic, as it was preserved by its best Emperors.

11. Probus, the next sovereign, maintained his place for

nearly seven years, and by military conquests suppressed all foreign and domestic enemies of the state. He could not, however, escape the usual fate of so many before him. A mutiny among his fierce legions proved fatal to him (A.D. 282). Carus, the prætorian captain, was proclaimed his successor, and died after a short reign of two years (A.D. 284), during a thunderstorm; but whether by the royal tent being set on fire, or by natural disease, is uncertain: his death is usually ascribed to a stroke of lightning. The choice of the army thus fell upon Diocletian, the commander of the body-guards of the Emperor; of whose life and actions a more detailed description is now to be given.

12. Diocletian had no claims to the empire from his birth, which was more mean and obscure than most of his predecessors. But he was indebted for this distinction to his post as General of the guards of the palace, and to the reputation he had gained in the Persian war. He was, in fact, raised to the place of sovereignty, as nearly all the Emperors had long been, by the voice of the army. But after attaining this elevation he was more distinguished as a statesman than a warrior. His valour was never found deficient, though he did not possess the daring and generous spirit of a hero. His abilities were useful rather than splendid. He had a mind of much vigour, much experience, great application to business, and was well skilled in all the arts of dissimulation.

13. Either because he felt himself unequal to the cares of the empire, or that he wished to make a show of moderation in the exercise of power, he imitated the example of Antoninus Pius, in one respect at least, by choosing a colleague, who might share his power and authority with him. His choice fell upon his friend, and older fellow-soldier Maximian. At first he gave him the title of Cæsar, and afterwards that of Augustus (A.D. 286).

14. Finding, however, that with only one associate, the empire was still in danger from the attacks of barbarian invaders, Diocletian resolved to make a further partition of his unwieldy power, by investing two others with the honours of the empire. For this reason he therefore selected Galerius and Constantius, both generals of approved merit. Each of the Emperors took one of these for his adopted son, conferring upon him a daughter in marriage. Diocletian chose the former, Maximian the latter; and they

were both styled the Cæsars. Thus the sovereignty of the empire at this time was divided into four parts, each having its own distinct territory to defend and govern. Gaul, Spain and Britain were entrusted to Constantius; Galerius was stationed on the banks of the Danube, as the safeguard of the Illyrian provinces; Italy and Africa were considered as the department of Maximian; and for his own peculiar portion, Diocletian reserved Thrace, Egypt, and the rich countries of Asia.

But this important measure, which eventually led to the dismemberment of the empire, was not carried into effect till nearly six years after Maximian had been an associate in the government.

15. About fourteen years subsequent to the partition of it into four distinct sovereignties, Constantius died in Britain (A.D. 306). His name is connected with the recovery of this island to the Romans after it had revolted under Carausius (A.D. 287), a Frank of the meanest origin, but a skilful sailor, and a courageous soldier. For seven years he here obtained possession of the supreme power, and by persuading the legion and auxiliaries who guarded this settlement to embrace his party, he was enabled to retain the title of Augustus, and to sever Britain from the Romans. Under the command of Carausius it began to assume the aspect of an independent monarchy, and with a powerful fleet, it acquired something of that maritime power, which in future ages was to invest it with the dominion of the seas.

16. Diocletian was constrained, though reluctantly, to acknowledge this usurper by a treaty of peace (A.D. 289). But as soon as Constantius acquired the nominal sovereignty of Britain, he restored new vigour to the Roman arms. Carausius was taken prisoner during the siege of Boulogne, and afterwards put to death by his minister Allectus. (A.D. 294). From that time the triumph of Rome was again complete. A single battle decided the fate of the island. Allectus was in his turn slain, and Constantius easily took possession of Britain after a separation which had been deeply regretted by the Romans (A.D. 296). Here the conqueror ended his life in the imperial palace of York (A.D. 306), and his death was immediately succeeded by the elevation of his son Constantine to that rank which he himself had held in the empire.

17. Another event resulting from the partition of the Roman government was the war which Diocletian carried on in Egypt (A.D. 296). He besieged Alexandria, and after eight months entered it, making a terrible example of these rebellious citizens. Many thousands of them perished in a promiscuous slaughter, and there were few persons conspicuous in the revolt who escaped a sentence of death, or exile. A curious circumstance occurred after this event. The Emperor issued an edict, in which he ordered diligent enquiry to be made for all books treating of the art of making gold or silver. These he commanded to be burnt. Whether he feared that the wealth of the Egyptians, if they possessed this art, would tempt them again to rebel, or whether for other reasons he wished to abolish the practice of alchemy, is uncertain. It has been observed that if he had really been convinced of the reality of such an art as this professes itself to be, he would have turned it to the improvement of the public revenue. It is probable, therefore, that he treated it as an imposture.

18. During the reign of Diocletian, the arduous task was accomplished of rescuing the empire from disgrace, and freeing it from the attacks of its most dangerous enemies. A treaty of peace was concluded with Persia; and upon entering the twentieth year of his reign, he celebrated the success of his arms in the pomp of a Roman triumph (A.D. 303). Maximian, his elder partner in the empire, was the only one of the four Emperors who shared the honours with him. The two younger princes had fought and conquered, but the merit of their exploits was, according to the rigour of those times ascribed entirely to the good fortunes of their fathers, the elder Emperors. In this procession Africa, and Britain, the Rhine, the Danube, and the Nile, each furnished their respective trophies*. But it is worthy of remark that this was almost the last ceremony of the kind which Rome was to behold. Soon after this period her warlike generals and rulers ceased to vanquish as they had done, or they displayed their victories more

* Pictures or models of the rivers, mountains, and provinces of Persia were carried before the imperial car. The images also of the captive wives, the sisters, and the children of the great king, who had been restored, afforded a spectacle that was novel as well as grateful to the people.

frequently in another city. Rome was hastening to become no longer the capital of the empire.

19. The removal of the Emperor with his court to another part of Italy, was among the causes which led to the decline of this ancient seat of the Roman power. A part of Italy more convenient for watching the movements of the barbarians of Germany was thought to be necessary for the residence of the general and governor of the state. For this object Maximian chose Milan, a city lying at the foot of the Alps, and it soon took the appearance of being a great capital. Diocletian, as ruler of the East, selected a more distant locality. He usually resided at Nicomedia, a city placed on the verge of Europe; at almost an equal distance from the Danube and the Euphrates. This he adorned with all the splendour befitting a royal abode, and it became in a few years inferior only to Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria, at that time the greatest cities of the world.

20. A higher style of royalty was assumed by Diocletian than by any of his predecessors. It now became a custom with the Emperors to be addressed by the title of "numen" or "divinity," "your sacred Majesty," "your divine oracles," in the preamble of laws. Pride or policy led him to introduce some of the stateliness of the court of Persia. He ventured to wear a crown (an ornament detested by the Romans in past times as the badge of kings), instead of a broad white fillet, set with pearls, which the Emperors usually had worn. His sumptuous robes were of silk embroidered with gold, and his shoes were studded with the most precious gems. Subjects, when admitted into the imperial presence—a matter by no means easy, were required, whatever their rank, to fall prostrate on the ground, according to eastern custom, and to adore the divinity of their lord and master. Diocletian might perhaps adopt this change of manners, to render the person of the Emperor more sacred and inviolable. That he did not really practise this ostentation of rank and riches without some object beyond his own dignity, seems sufficiently clear, from his resigning the empire shortly after he had advanced himself to the summit of greatness.

21. Not long after his triumphant march through Rome, this Emperor carried into effect his resolution to relinquish

all the powers of a sovereign, and to retire into a private station. Few monarchs have resigned their authority under such circumstances. The instance of Charles the Fifth is somewhat similar. But his abdication may be traced to a disappointment in his favourite schemes. No such reason can be alleged in the case of Diocletian. His reign had been a career of uninterrupted success, and it was not till after he had vanquished all his foes, and completed all his designs that he resigned the empire. His abdication must be assigned to something perhaps of the same feeling as led the king of Israel at the height of power to say, "Vanity of vanities—all is vanity!" And this feeling was at this time rendered still more sensitive by those bodily infirmities which were the result of the cares of royalty, and of the distractions of business, which brought on the languor and indifference of old age—days of weariness, when men are disposed to say of all the joys and sympathies peculiar even to rank and station, "I have no pleasure in them."

22. When the sovereign of the Roman Empire resolved to abdicate he gave public notice of it, and the ceremony took place in a spacious plain near Nicomedia, on the first of May (A.D. 305). On this occasion he ascended a lofty throne for the last time, and delivered a speech to the soldiers and to the people, explaining the reasons of his conduct. He then in a dignified manner took off his purple mantle, and withdrew from the gazing multitude. Proceeding in a covered chariot, he set out immediately to the place chosen for his retirement, in his native country of Dalmatia. He lived for nine years in a private condition near Salona, and here, at the distance of 200 miles from Rome, was the spot where the Emperor retired from the world, and built a magnificent palace, the ruins of which are still pointed out at Spalatro. This structure covered between nine and ten acres of ground. Its form was quadrangular, and it had sixteen towers on its sides. It contained one temple dedicated to Esculapius, the god of health, and another to Jupiter, besides a number of stately halls built after the Grecian and Egyptian models. It consisted, however, only of one story, and its chambers were deficient of a great modern requisite—chimneys—and windows in the walls. The rooms were lighted from the roof, and warmed by pipes of heated air. A portico, 500 feet in length, faced its

principal apartments, forming a very noble and delightful walk, where the beauties of painting and sculpture were added to the charms of the prospect, that commanded views at once striking and beautiful, of mountains, woods, and the Hadriatic Sea*.

23. This description of the palace of Diocletian will not be thought useless in this place, conveying as it does some idea of the architectural taste of the Romans at this period. It serves to show also, how active the mind of such a man continued to be, even in his retirement; though what ultimate object he could have had to gratify by this building, except to leave a monument of himself, does not appear. In his solitude Diocletian enjoyed for a time the respect of those princes to whom he had resigned the possession of the empire; but he seems to have had a morose disposition, and even his wife Prisca did not share his abode with him. Neither letters nor devotion were suited to his mind, yet he had some taste for rustic pleasures and occupations. In planting and gardening he spent a portion of his time, and when on one occasion he was asked by Maximian to resume his power as Emperor, he calmly observed, that if he could but show him the cabbages he had raised with his own hands, he would no longer urge him to relinquish his present enjoyments for the pursuits of empire. In conversation with his friends he would sometimes say, "Of all arts the most difficult is that of reigning. How often is it the interest of four or five ministers to deceive their sovereign! Secluded from mankind by his exalted dignity, the truth is concealed from his knowledge; he can only see with their eyes, and hears nothing but their misrepresentations. He confers the most important offices upon vice and weakness, and disgraces the most virtuous and deserving among his subjects. By such infamous arts, the best and wisest princes are sold to the venal corruptions of their courtiers."

24. We cannot suppose, however, that Diocletian was entirely divested of the cares of human life, by his retirement from its dignities. Fear, sorrow, and discontent must sometimes have found their way into the solitude of Salona. He could not be insensible of the troubles which afflicted

* The extensive ruins of this palace have been well described and illustrated in Adam's work on the subject, fol., 1764.

the empire after his abdication; as some of these fell upon his own family. A civil war sprung up between those whom he had left in the enjoyment of power, and their rivals. Maximian had been persuaded to resign his office at the same time as Diocletian. And Galerius and Constantius therefore took the place of the older Emperors. Upon the death of his father, Constantine became the partner of Galerius in the government, and the two others who shared it were Severus and Maximin. But another claimant put forward his right at Rome (A.D. 306). This was Maxentius, the son of Maximian. In consequence of this movement, the latter again re-assumed the dignity of Emperor, and defeated and put to death Severus, the adopted son of Galerius (A.D. 306). The latter nominated a successor to the fallen Cæsar, in the person of Licinius. Thus, for a time, the Roman world was under the administration of six Emperors. In the West, however, Constantine and Maxentius were adherents of Maximian, and in the East, Licinius and Maximin united their interest with that of Galerius. The flames of national discord were in this manner kindled, and were not finally extinguished until Constantine subdued all his rivals and partners in power, and restored the empire to its original condition, by bringing it under the authority of one sovereign.

25. The wife and daughter of Diocletian were among the sufferers by this dissension, and were driven into banishment by the tyrant Maximin. He wished to make Valeria, the widow of Galerius, his wife. Her refusal and remonstrance were followed by persecution and exile. Diocletian interceded for his daughter, and entreated that she might share his retirement. But this request was refused, and Valeria and her mother Prisca were constrained to remain in the deserts of Syria. At the death of Maximin, they were enabled to return to their own country again, and were induced to hope for the protection of Licinius. In this they were deceived. The bloody executions which took place at Nicomedia, soon convinced them that a tyrant equally cruel as their former persecutor reigned there. The unhappy empresses consulted their safety by flight, and wandered about fifteen months through the provinces, concealed in the disguise of plebeian dresses. At length they were discovered at Thessalonica, and, having been proscribed, they were

immediately beheaded, and their bodies thrown into the sea.

26. Diocletian died the year previous to this calamity which befell his family; but the sense of their previous misfortunes and of his own fallen dignity, must have wounded his pride and his tenderness. His last years were thus embittered by a knowledge of the wrongs and affronts offered to his family, by those who owed to his abdication the power to injure. There is some reason to believe, that anticipating the evils which befell his wife and daughter, and which might be likely to overtake himself, he put an end to his life, or died in a state of insanity (A.D. 312).

27. The age of Diocletian, worthy of notice as it is, on account of the events already described, is rendered still more so by the persecution to which Christianity was now subjected. This is the period of what is called the tenth general persecution. As it was the last, so it was also the worst of the series, being thus distinguished by the number of its martyrs, the severity of the punishments inflicted upon them, and the long continuance of these evils.

28. Diocletian during the greater part of his reign, or for about eighteen years, was one of the mildest and most tolerant of the Emperors with regard to religion; and the Christians enjoyed a long interval of peace and prosperity. The truths of the gospel had been listened to with attention and respect, even by the Empress and her daughter. The principal persons of the palace were also strongly prepossessed in its favour, and the most important offices of the state were conferred upon those who were avowedly professors of the new religion. The church at this time could boast of its increasing number of proselytes, and of the size and splendour of its places for public worship. It was at this season that a persecution fell upon it, unexampled in its atrocities, and one which must have utterly destroyed it, if its origin had not been divine, and if it had not been divinely supported to bear the trial.

29. The enemies who were permitted to influence the mind of Diocletian to a new line of policy towards his Christian subjects, were his partners in the empire, Maximian and Galerius, who had conceived an implacable aversion for the name and religion of Christians. Their animosity had been particularly awakened by a zeal, perhaps

imprudent on the part of some of those belonging to the Roman army. One of them, a centurion, named Marcellus, on the day of a public festival, threw away his arms, declaring that he renounced for ever the use of such weapons, and the service of an idolatrous master. This might justly have been considered as an act of rebellion. But there is reason to believe that, on this as well as on other occasions, the cause which led the Christian soldiers to this bold avowal of their principles, was some increase of rigour on the part of paganism, compelling them to take a more conspicuous place in its idolatrous services. This was probably at the instigation of Galerius, whose mother was extremely bigoted to superstition, and who stimulated her son to seek the destruction of a sect whom she hated. Diocletian himself was extremely reluctant to begin this work of persecution; and a whole winter was passed in the palace of Nicomedia in deliberation on this business, his partners in power using all the arts of persuasion to overcome his reluctance. But their purpose was at length affected, and on the 23rd of February (A.D. 303), the feast of Terminus, the persecution was commenced by the demolition of the principal church of Nicomedia. This building, though it was a large and lofty one, was in a few hours levelled to the ground by the Prætorian soldiers.

30. The next day an edict appeared, in which all who professed the Christian faith, of whatever rank or degree, were deprived of their honours and distinctions, threatened with tortures, and declared to be outlaws. One of the proscribed class was bold enough to pull down the edict from the place where it was fixed, and to tear it. The punishment of being burnt to death by a slow fire, immediately awaited him; and thus he was the first of "that noble army of martyrs" in this age, whose heroic fortitude and suffering tended rather to inflame than to subdue the hearts of their pagan persecutors.

31. Shortly afterwards a destructive fire broke out in the palace, and Lactantius, the historian, charges it upon Galerius. It was imputed, however, to the malice of the Christians; and served to raise the indignation of the old Emperor, which was already beginning to cool. From this time, he became thoroughly in earnest as a persecutor. His wife and daughter, being suspected of a leaning to

Christianity, were compelled to sacrifice; and no punishments were spared which could strike terror into the minds of the friends or proselytes of this religion. Every mode of torture was put in practice, and new modes invented. Eunuchs of the greatest power in the palace were slain. The clergy of all orders, and persons of every age and sex, were sentenced to the flames, and many were burnt at one time: some, with millstones round their necks, were thrown into the sea. The prisons were full; and to prevent the possibility of any Christian obtaining common justice, altars were placed in the courts, and the cause of no one could be heard till he had done sacrifice.

32. This persecution was not, as many others had been, merely local, but it gradually pervaded the whole Roman world. France suffered less than any other part of the Empire, being under the rule of the mild Constantius, whose authority only aided the persecutors in demolishing the churches of the Christians, while he screened their persons from the fury of the populace, and the rigour of the laws.

33. Diocletian had no sooner published his edict than, as if ashamed of his work, or desirous of committing it to other hands, he withdrew from the world, and resigned his office of Emperor. His successors followed up his orders with furious zeal. Egypt and Palestine were especially the scenes of the most cruel martyrdoms. In the former of these places, whole families were put to death in various ways. Some perished by famine; others by crucifixion. The scenes of horror that were exhibited in Thebais exceed all description; no pity was shown to any age or sex. A hundred of both sexes, together with their children, were murdered in one day.

34. Wearied at length by the constancy of the sufferers, the persecutors tried another method. They pretended to be desirous of saving life, and contented themselves with mutilating, instead of killing their victims. Multitudes, deprived of their eyes, and with one of their legs cut off, were condemned as criminals to work in the mines during the rest of their lives.

35. How far this persecution succeeded for a time in stopping the progress of Christianity, may be judged of from the following facts. Two pillars were set up in

Spain: on one of them the inscription was to this effect, that Diocletian had extinguished the name of Christians; on the other it was declared that he had everywhere abolished the superstition of Christ, and extended the worship of the gods. A medal was also struck in honour of this Emperor bearing the remarkable words, "Nomine Christianorum deleto," to intimate that it was a memorial of the extinction of the Christian name.

It was not till the seventh year of the persecution (A.D. 310) that the sufferings of the martyrs underwent any mitigation. But at this time the hand of a chastising Providence had fallen heavily on Galerius, the grand instigator of these wrongs; and he himself was now tormented by the infliction of a disease of the most horrible and loathsome nature. All the lower parts of his body became the seat of a foul and deadly cancer; and, like Herod, he was the example of a living death, being a mass of putrefaction, and eaten up of worms. Softened by his sufferings, he published an edict, in which he pretended that his severe measures towards the Christians had been intended to bring them back to their old institutions; but that, having failed to do so, he now permitted them, out of his clemency, to rebuild their places of worship, and required them to pray to God for his recovery, as well as for the safety of the commonwealth. About six months after this order Galerius terminated his wretched existence. During this period the prisons were set open. Those who had been sentenced to the mines returned back to their own homes, and the church again enjoyed a short interval of repose.

36. Maximin, who governed in the East, upon the death of Galerius (A.D. 311) renewed the persecution, at first with violence, but presently after, he took a method of conducting it less sanguinary but equally atrocious. He circulated throughout the empire the worst calumnies against the Christians, and used every means to make their creed contemptible; then, affecting a degree of clemency, instead of ordering them to be put to death as before, he directed a variety of punishments to be inflicted upon them, as the badges of infamy. They were to have their eyes plucked out; or their hands or feet, their noses or their ears, cut off; or to suffer other disgraceful mutilations.

37. But the triumph of this demon in human form was but

short. Within two years afterwards (A.D. 313) he was defeated in an engagement with Licinius, who was now contending with him for the rights of Emperor. Though Maximin had made a vow to Jupiter, that if he got the victory he would blot out the very name of Christian, yet now struck with rage at his disappointment, he turned his fury against his own priests and prophets, who had seduced him into the belief that he should gain the whole empire of the East. His adversaries also, Constantine and Licinius, had published edicts of toleration; and therefore to be even with them in conciliating a class of his subjects whom he knew to be very numerous, he published a declaration of peace and favour towards the Christians. His repentance, however, came too late, and divine vengeance was at hand. He fortified himself in vain upon Mount Taurus, and seeing his retreat was about to be cut off, he fled to Tarsus. Here, seeing no escape, he took poison; but this, instead of killing him at once, produced only a lingering torment, in which at last he became frantic, and rushed against a wall with so much violence that he lost his eyesight. During his agony he seemed to be in a vision, and spoke as if he were a criminal before the tribunal of the Great Judge, calling out for mercy, and imploring Jesus Christ to have pity on him, and excuse his cruelties. In this state of anguish he lived four days; and at length, as the historian Lactantius says, "breathed out his defiled soul in the most dreadful manner that can be imagined."

38. From this time we may consider the history of pagan persecution as almost closed. Ten years and about four months had elapsed since the destruction of the church in Nicomedia to the rebuilding of it under the friendly auspices of Constantine. Throughout this long period of trial, Christianity acquired as trophies of her zeal and patience, the far greater number of those names which are now so resplendent in her calendars and legends, of confessors, saints, and martyrs. This era, terminating a little before the death of Diocletian, marks the commencement of a new period in the annals of the church: henceforth paganism became too feeble to oppose the progress of Christianity; for the transient and limited outbreak of violence in the reign of Julian the Apostate, can scarcely be considered an exception to this remark.

The violence of the attack to which Christianity was exposed during the age of Diocletian, answered one important end at least in the designs of Providence; for it served to show the impotence of its enemies in accomplishing the purpose they had in view; and to all future ages it has been thus demonstrated that true religion contains within it a principle of divine fortitude, sufficient to baffle and confound the utmost malice of the persecutors. What the precise number of martyrs was, who now suffered throughout the Roman Empire, it is no easy matter to determine. It has been calculated that those who were put to death by some of the various forms of torture which the law allowed, did not exceed two thousand; but the number who suffered other punishments of the most grievous kinds, must have been far greater. Even, however, with the lowest estimate, we cannot but be struck with the view which it presents of the deadly malignity of paganism, when once aroused in earnest to its murderous work; and the folly of the tyrants who lent it their aid on this occasion is equally conspicuous. Nothing short of a spirit of demoniacal frenzy and madness, could have led them to persevere so long in the work of attempting to extirpate a religion, whose unshrinking firmness in the endurance of every form of torture and death, nine successive persecutions might already have taught them. And undoubtedly they ought to have learned a better lesson even from a great Roman poet, whose picture of the just man unmoved by suffering so well describes the constancy of the Christian martyrs:

"Justum, et tenacem propositi virum,
Non civium ardor prava jubentium,
Non vultus instantis tyranni
Mente quatit solida."

39. Such reflections naturally arise in reading the narrative of this persecuting reign. But let not the Christian reader too hastily condemn those pagan persecutors, whose evil example appears to have been lost sight of as a warning. It would have been well for the honour of that religion, which breathes only a spirit of charity and mercy, if its annals had never been forced to record the history of persecution, carried on in the name of Christianity against supposed heretics. Diocletian, and his partners in power,

are justly branded with ignominy, for their want of humanity towards a rising sect. But what must be thought of princes called "Christian," and "most Christian," who have inflicted even worse sufferings than pagan persecutors, upon their unhappy subjects, under the pretence of zeal for religion! In the Netherlands alone, more than 100,000 of the subjects of Charles the Fifth are said to have suffered death on religious grounds. During the five years of Pope Adrian upwards of 24,000 persons were condemned by the Inquisition, of whom more than 1600 were burned alive; and in the massacre of St. Bartholomew, according to the testimony of Sully, not less than 70,000 victims perished. When we remember these things, the violence of pagan persecution sinks into comparative insignificance. Upon the perpetrators of such enormities, there must ever rest a darker and more indelible brand of infamy than is stamped upon a Diocletian, a Galerius, or a Maximin. Tyrants as these were, they let loose the furies of cruelty, not in the name of a merciful religion, like that which Christianity professes itself to be, but under the sanction of deities that had no attribute of mercy; and for the avowed purpose of giving support to a falling creed, based upon a superstition naturally intolerant, ignorant, and cruel, whose persecuting tenets ought to have been held in eternal abhorrence by the followers of One, who denounced them plainly enough when he said, "The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." *

* Luke ix. 53, 56.

SUMMARY OF ERA THE FIFTH.

1. Remarkable circumstance in which Diocletian resembles Augustus.—2. The Emperors who preceded him from the death of Marcus Aurelius; the reign of Commodus.—3. Of Severus.—4. Macrinus and Elegabalus.—5. Alexander Severus, and the two Gordians.—6. Maximus and Balbinus; the younger Gordian sole emperor, followed by Philip.—7. The reign of Decius; he falls in a battle with the Goths.—8. Gallus and Æmilianus succeeded by Valerian; his calamitous reign, and unfortunate end in Persia.—9. Gallienus emperor; a number of rivals start up to dispute the empire.—10. Gallienus succeeded by the Gothic Claudius; his victories; short reign of Tacitus.—11. Probus and Carus.—12. Diocletian ascends the throne; his character.—13. He associates Maximian with him in the empire.—14. Galerius and Constantius are afterwards selected to share the sovereignty; the division of the empire between these four princes.—15. Constantius dies in Britain; the usurpation of Carausius.—16. The usurper acknowledged by Diocletian; afterwards put to death; Constantine succeeds Constantius.—17. Diocletian's war in Egypt; his edict respecting books of alchemy.—18. He conquers Persia; his triumph at Rome.—19. Residences of the Emperors at Milan and Nicomedia.—20. Diocletian assumes the highest style of royalty.—21. Resolves to resign the empire; probable motives for his resignation. 22. The ceremony of his resignation and retirement; his palace in Dalmatia described.—23. His amusements and reflections after his retirement.—24. Effects of the resignation of Diocletian; a civil war begins; Maxentius supported by Maximian, who resumes the empire; the rival claimants and their supporters.—25. The sufferings of Prisca and Valeria, wife and daughter of Diocletian.—26. The last years and death of Diocletian.—27. The age of Diocletian in connection with the tenth general persecution of Christians. —28. State of Christianity at the beginning of his reign. —29. Causes which led to the breaking out of the perse-

ı.—30. The severest laws and punishments enacted ıt Christians.—31. Diocletian persecutes them with severity after a fire takes place in the palace.—32. persecution extends itself over the whole empire.— t rages with the greatest severity in Palestine and :.—34. The persecutors resort to mutilation of the ıs, whose lives they spare.—35. Proofs of the extent e persecution; Galerius dies of a horrible disease; the persecution before his death.—36. Maximin ɾs the persecution with great cruelties.—37. Licinius ts Maximin; the horrible end of this tyrant.—38. era of pagan persecution closes; the number of the tian martyrs; the malignity and impotence of paganism lemonstrated.—39. Concluding reflections on the com- ɔn between Pagan and Christian persecutors.

ERA THE SIXTH.

THE LIFE OF CONSTANTINE THE GREAT.

THE CONVERSION OF THE ROMAN EMPERORS TO CHRISTIANITY, AND THE DOWNFALL OF PAGANISM.

1. THIS Emperor, whose history presents itself as one of the most striking and brilliant in the page of human renown, is called the Great, to distinguish him from many others who bore the same name, but without any of its original lustre. The family from which he sprung was that of Claudius, surnamed the Gothic; and this was made still more noble and princely, by his father Constantius having been one of the four Emperors who first reigned together. From him was derived a name which transmitted its honours to several generations. The mother of Constantine was Helena; but whether she was the daughter of a British king or of an innkeeper is uncertain. He was born, most probably in Dacia, and not in Britain, as some have supposed. The last of the illustrious exploits of his father was in that island, where he distinguished himself against the barbarians of Caledonia. Constantine was bred a soldier, and in the early part of his life, had little leisure to bestow upon the acquisition of knowledge. His time was spent in camps, and in the business of war. His mother having been divorced for state reasons, when his father married the daughter of Maximian, he did not follow Constantius into the west, but remained in the service of Diocletian, signalizing his valour in the wars of Egypt and Persia, and thus gradually attaining the station of a tribune of the first order.

2. Constantine was formed by nature to excel, and to make his way in the hearts of mankind. His figure was tall and majestic, and full of that manly and noble beauty which the Greeks have ascribed to their Apollo. In the sculptures of a somewhat later period, he was represented with the symbols of that pagan deity, who was supposed to be the god of light and of poetry. Intrepid in war and affable in peace, he was also endowed with an habitual prudence; and while he pursued the career of an honourable ambition with energy, he was enabled to control his passions, and to resist the allurements of pleasure. He was therefore highly popular with the soldiers and the people, who were eager to see him placed in the rank of Cæsar—a circumstance which gave no small jealousy to Galerius, his father's partner in the empire. That subtle tyrant was anxiously awaiting the death of Constantius, to confer this rank upon one of his own favourites. But the latter, anticipating the near approach of death, earnestly desired the presence of his son, and sent to Galerius repeated letters to that effect. The permission was at length reluctantly granted; and, though orders were craftily sent to stop him on the road, yet Constantine, by his foresight and rapid journey through the eastern provinces, reached Britain in time to receive his father's last embraces, and his dying recommendation to the choice of the soldiers (A.D. 306).

3. Constantine was in the thirty-second year of his age, at the time of his father's death; and the army having at once acknowledged the son of their victorious general as his successor in the empire, Galerius was constrained to admit his claim to be the sovereign of the provinces beyond the Alps; but he gave him only the title of Cæsar, and the fourth rank among the Roman princes. Without disputing his right to a higher dignity at that time, Constantine awaited, without impatience, for a future opportunity of obtaining the supreme power.

4. This opportunity was soon afforded him by the civil war which Maxentius had raised in Rome, to vindicate his right to the place of Emperor in opposition to Severus, one of the four rulers, and the adopted son of Galerius (A.D. 306). About six years afterwards, the usurper having succeeded in making good his title to this dignity, by the defeat and

death of his rival, resolved to reign the entire sovereign of the West, and treated with indignity the statues that had been erected in Italy and Africa in honour of Constantine. This was a declaration of war which the latter could not mistake. An embassy also from the Senate and people of Rome, invited him to deliver them from a tyrant whom they detested. He therefore lost no time in raising his standard against Maxentius. Breaking through the armies which met him on his descent from the Alps, our hero now rushed onward until he saw the army of his enemy drawn up before the gates of Rome. At this time one of the most memorable events which the world has ever witnessed took place. It can scarcely be regarded in any other light than that of a miraculous interposition, intended to rescue Constantine and his empire from the power of Paganism.

5. Constantine's army was in numbers far inferior to that of his enemy. This fearless soldier had crossed the Alps with an army of 40,000 men, but the force of Maxentius amounted to 175,000 foot, and 18,000 horse. Constantine was the first soldier of his age; yet even his undaunted courage might well have hesitated to engage an enemy not only so greatly superior in appearance, but one who was believed to have strengthened his arms by magic. On this occasion, however, his courage did not desert him, and religion came to his aid. Eusebius tells us, that he began to reflect that those emperors who had relied like Maxentius on the multitude of their gods, had come to an evil end, and had been deceived by their oracles; while his father Constantius who, during his whole life, had honoured one sovereign God, had received evident marks of his protection. He now considered that it was a folly to honour gods which were nothing, and that he ought to worship the God of his father. He then invoked him, praying fervently that he would make himself known and help him. Eusebius further relates that while the Emperor was thus praying, he saw an extraordinary sign in the heavens, and that Constantine himself had confirmed to him with an oath the truth of this story, and he could not therefore refuse to believe it. This sign was the appearance in the sky of a pillar of light in the form of a cross, and round about it the inscription, "By this conquer." Constantine was startled at the sight, as likewise his whole army, who beheld it, and many of

them looked upon it as an unfortunate omen, portending the defeat of his expedition. The Emperor himself knew not what to understand by it, but at night he had a dream in which a divine personage appeared to him, and commanded him to make a royal standard like that which he had seen in the heavens, and to engrave the figure of it on the shields of his soldiers; and that this should be a token of safety and victory. This Constantine immediately did, himself directing the workmen according to the pattern he had seen. The standard formed on this occasion, and called the Labarum, was a long pike intersected by a transverse piece at the top, so as to form the figure of a cross. A silken veil hung from the beam, and was curiously inwrought with images of the reigning monarch and his children. The summit of the pike supported a crown, which enclosed the sacred monogram or initial letters expressive of the name of Christ. With a banner of this kind it was, according to the testimony of Eusebius, that Constantine and his army now marched on to meet Maxentius. Figures of it are seen on coins of this Emperor which exist to the present day. When the armies met, that of Maxentius was after a fierce struggle driven from the field. In his retreat to Rome, the tyrant himself was forced into the Tiber with the flying multitude, and drowned by the weight of his own armour. Constantine pursued without further opposition his march to Rome, and took possession of the imperial city, after thus achieving the most splendid enterprise of his life (Oct. 28, A.D. 312).

6. There were two other wars besides this, in which Constantine distinguished himself as the first military hero of that age. About ten years after the event just described, he was called to vindicate the empire from the incursions of the barbarians, who now, by a peace of long duration, had recovered their strength. A new generation also had arisen, who no longer remembered the misfortunes of former days. The Sarmatians, near the Lake Mœotis, followed the Goths in this invasion, and their united forces were poured upon Illyricum and the neighbouring countries. After an obstinate resistance Constantine drove them back into their own country, and compelled them to restore their plunder and their prisoners. Not content with this advantage, he resolved still further to chastise them by carrying the war

into their own territory. Having crossed the Danube, penetrated into Dacia, and inflicted upon them a signal punishment, he condescended to make peace with the suppliants on condition that they should supply the Roman army with a body of 40,000 men as often as they were required (A.D. 322).

7. The next great achievement of his reign took place about a year afterwards, or A.D. 323. This was his victory over Licinius, whom he defeated, with the assistance of his eldest son, Crispus, first at Hadrianople, then at Byzantium, and lastly at Chrysopolis, or Scrutari, as it is now called. On the death of this, his only remaining rival, at the end of a short interval of confinement, the Roman world was again peaceably united under one Emperor, thirty-seven years after Diocletian had divided his power with Maximian (A.D. 324).

8. When Constantine had thus secured the safety and glory of his throne, he purposed to add additional splendour to his reign, and to give strength to the empire by laying the foundations of a new city in the East (A.D. 324). This city still perpetuates his name, and in beauty of situation and natural position as a place of defence has, perhaps, nothing equal to it throughout the world. The chief motive which led the mind of the Conqueror to fix upon Byzantium, and to make it the seat of the empire of the East, was to enable its rulers with a more ready and powerful arm to curb the barbarians who dwell between the rivers Danube and Tanais; and thus also they might hope to watch with a more jealous eye the Persian monarch, who indignantly supported the yoke which had been placed upon him by an ignominious treaty with Diocletian.

9. In building this great capital, Constantine, the master of the Roman world, aspired to erect a lasting monument of the glories of his reign, and in the prosecution of this great work he employed the wealth, the labour and all that yet remained of the genius of obedient millions. The expenses bestowed upon its walls, its porticoes, and its aqueducts amounted to 60,000 lbs. weight of gold, or as it is computed in the modern reckoning to 2,500,000*l.* sterling. Whatever could adorn the dignity of a great metropolis, or contribute to the benefit or pleasure of its inhabitants, was to be found within the walls of Constantinople. It

contained a capitol or school of learning, a circus, 2 theatres, 8 public, and 153 private baths; 52 porticoes, 5 granaries, 8 aqueducts or reservoirs of water, 4 spacious halls for meetings of the senate or courts of justice; 14 churches, the same number of palaces, and more than 4000 houses, which in size and beauty were distinguished from the multitude of plebeian habitations. The dedication of this city took place A.D. 330 or 334. The games and largesses which crowned the ceremony of this festival may easily be supposed to have been on a magnificent scale. At this festival an edict was engraved on a column of marble, which bestowed the title of Second, or New Rome, on the city of Constantine. The name of the founder, however, was permanently affixed to it, as the more honourable epithet, and from that time it became the resort of many of the noble families of Rome; and the latter being no longer the court of the Emperor, the new capital gradually usurped the place of the first city of the Roman Empire.

10. A greater change than even this removal of the seat of the empire was speedily to be effected in the Roman world, by a revolution in matters of religion. From the period of his becoming Emperor in conjunction with Licinius (A.D. 312), Constantine had shewn a favourable disposition towards Christianity. His father Constantius had always acted with much forbearance towards the Christians, sparing their persons, if not their churches, during the Diocletian persecution, and one of the son's first acts after inheriting his office was to publish an edict of toleration (A.D. 313). After the victory over Maxentius, the mind of Constantine was still more strongly inclined to Christianity. Its bishops were treated with great respect, and every privilege was conceded to this religion, that was consistent with the mere existence of Paganism, and the exemption of the latter from persecution. This politic Emperor was too wise to attempt the overturning of an old system of superstition by hasty movements. But as soon as he was possessed of the sole power of the empire, he issued letters to all his subjects, exhorting them without delay, to imitate the example of their sovereign, and to embrace the divine truths of Christianity.

11. His general conduct, in other respects, accorded with

this declaration. He received the Christian bishops with all honour and due respect, taking them with him in his journeys, and entertaining them often at his table. He exempted the clergy from all civil and secular employments, and freed their churches from the taxes and tributes ordinarily assessed upon all other persons and societies. He also abolished the punishment of crucifixion out of reverence to our Saviour's passion, and from a wish to do honour to that heavenly vision of the cross which had so lately appeared to him as the forerunner of a happy victory.

12. Many proofs are left, besides these, of the sincerity of his conversion. Some years before his death he proclaimed to the world that neither his person, nor his image should ever more be seen within the walls of an idolatrous temple. In the midst of his incessant labours, he found time to read and study the holy Scriptures, and even to compose theological discourses, which he afterwards delivered to numerous and applauding audiences. In his own example, as well as by precept, he endeavoured to secure the sacred observance of the Lord's day. For his army he expressly composed a form of prayer, to be offered up when they were encamped in the open fields, and directed that the courts of justice should be shut for public business on Fridays, and on the great festival of the Resurrection. He built also many noble churches and oratories in his own city, and its neighbourhood; and shewed the same care for the advancement of the Christian faith in that country from whence it sprung. At Jerusalem, and in Palestine, where his mother Helena chiefly dwelt, and exerted her piety in discovering the holy places which were consecrated by the memory of the great author of our religion, Constantine is said to have erected three churches, one on the supposed site of the Nativity, another at the place of the Ascension, and a third (now known as the church of the Holy Sepulchre), over the spot where Christ was entombed (A.D. 327).

13. To show, however, a strong determination to set up Christianity in opposition to Paganism, this Emperor gave orders that some of the heathen temples should be demolished. Their statues of gold, in certain instances, were melted down and coined into money; or if made of baser materials were dragged about the streets for public derision. At Aphaca, in Phœnicia, where there stood a temple which

had been the scene of many unholy rites, the worship of Venus was put a stop to, by the edifice being pulled down, and its rich gifts and ornaments disposed of. And a similar proceeding took place at Heliopolis in that country, a church being built there in the room of its idolatrous temple, and supplied with a bishop and other ministers of religion. More instances are recorded to the same effect, as the destruction of the temple of Æsculapius at Ægæ in Cilicia, and the dispersion of the Androgyni or priests of the Nile, who were accustomed to perform ridiculous ceremonies in honour of that river. In short, by several laws he forbad the offering of any sacrifices to the pagan gods (A.D. 332); and though their temples were still left standing in Rome and Alexandria, the practice of the heathen ceremonies there or elsewhere was only permitted by an act of forbearance and connivance, and no longer formed a necessary part of the religion of the empire. The priests were not universally, as appears by one of his edicts directed to Felix, prefect of Africa (A.D. 335), deprived of their honours or revenues; for this would have been too dangerous an experiment in all cases, and might have defeated the object that the Emperor had in view, which was to undermine the old superstition, and to make it gradually contemptible, rather than to pluck it up at once by the roots. Of this we have an example in the portico erected before his palace, where he caused himself to be represented at full length, with the cross over his head, and a dragon under his feet struck through with darts, and falling into the sea, to denote by what assistance he had routed and intended to destroy pagan superstition, the old enemy of mankind.

14. As the friend and patron of the Christian religion, one of the greatest acts of the life of Constantine was his endeavour to act the part of an umpire or judge in those religious disputes which were, at this period, beginning to divide the church. At an early period of his reign he called together an assembly of the clergy at Arles (A.D. 314), to determine a controversy affecting the welfare of their community in Africa. Eleven years afterwards (A.D. 325) he convened a more numerous and celebrated assembly at Nice, in Bithynia, to extinguish, by their final sentence, the disputes which had arisen in Egypt on the doctrine of the Trinity. Three hundred and eighteen bishops obeyed the

summons, and the clergy of every rank and sect present, have been computed at two thousand and forty-eight persons. The session which lasted about two months, was frequently honoured by the presence of the Emperor himself, who leaving his guards at the door, took his seat in the midst of the hall, clothed in his most splendid robes. Constantine, great as he was, listened with patience and spoke with modesty; professing himself to be the minister, and not the judge of those venerable councillors. He exhorted them to peace and unanimity; and a number of mutual accusations having been presented to him he threw them all into the fire, protesting that he had not read one of them. Although the decisions of this synod did not put a stop to the Arian controversy, yet its results were upon the whole highly important, as showing what were the opinions of the great majority there assembled, in opposition to Arius and his party. Their opinions were expressed, and embodied in that profession of faith which has been adopted in all subsequent ages of the Catholic Church, under the name of the Nicene Creed, the greatest part of it having been drawn up on this occasion, and subscribed to, as a standard of sound doctrine. A crowd of martyrs and confessors joined in the sentence against Arius and his opinions. Some of these had suffered by the application of hot iron to both hands. Others appeared who had been deprived of a right eye, an arm, or a leg. All, with the exception of twenty-two, united in condemning Arius to be deposed from his office, to be excommunicated, and to be forbidden to enter Alexandria, where he had hitherto officiated as a priest. Three months after the dissolution of the council, Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theogius of Nice were banished by the Emperor's command, for attempting still to support the Arian cause.

15. The reign of an Emperor, so well disposed to lend all his aid to promote the success and welfare of the Christian religion, afforded peculiar advantages for its extension to the remotest limits of the Roman Empire, and even beyond it. The Iberi, since called the Georgians, and the Indians, and Abyssinians, are said to have been now taught the doctrines of Christianity. An embassy being sent from the king of the first of these countries, to desire that bishops and preachers might be sent among his people, Constantine honoured it with peculiar respect, and readily complied with

the request. He also addressed a letter to Sapor, king of Persia, on behalf of the Christians in his dominions; and as long as peace subsisted between the two empires, the persecutions of the Magi were restrained by this interposition. The powerful influence of such a sovereign as Constantine was not circumscribed by the narrow limits of his life, or dominions. From this era Christianity became virtually the religion of the whole empire; and Paganism, though not actually abolished, ceased to have any of those attractions which birth or power had so long bestowed upon its favourite superstitions. It was hastening rapidly to that overthrow which was still more complete in the reign of Theodosius.

16. Yet Constantine, though acting like a Christian prince in all these matters, still hesitated to join himself to the church, by receiving the rite of baptism, and thus remained without taking upon himself this visible sign of the religion of Christ, till towards the last moments of his life. His reason for this neglect may have been a persuasion, then very common, that the guilt contracted during a whole life would thus be more effectually washed away, by the water of regeneration, and perhaps the remembrance of some of those unrighteous actions, which he had committed during a long reign, might have induced him, from a sense of humility, to deem himself unworthy of so sacred a privilege. Constantine had carried on wars in which was shed much blood: and that perchance lay heavy on his conscience. The death also of his son Crispus (A.D. 326), and perhaps of his wife Fausta (though the first suffered, probably, as a traitor, and the latter as a suspected adulteress), were circumstances, the remembrance of which might have implanted in his breast a feeling of remorse, sufficient to make him account himself unfit for admission into the bosom of the church, till after a long period of penitence. Towards the close of his days he summoned the bishops to the palace of Acquyrion, near Nicomedia; whither he had retired for the benefit of the air, and with the hope of recruiting his strength by the use of the warm baths. As soon as he grew worse, those who attended him were gratified by the manner in which he requested, and received the sacrament of baptism. He then solemnly promised that the remainder of his life should be worthy of a disciple of

Christ; and after he had been clothed in the white robe, which the Neophytes (as they were called) wore on such occasions, he humbly declared with much humility that he would never more put on the imperial purple. After a short illness he expired at the mature age of sixty-four, in the thirtieth year of his reign, a period which none of his predecessors had reached since the time of Augustus (A.D. 337).

17. The demonstrations of grief, or at least of mourning for the death of Constantine, surpassed anything which had ever been practised on the occurrence of similar events. The Senate of Rome shut up the baths and the forum, and prohibited public spectacles of every kind; statues were dedicated to him; and all the while he lay in state, the great officers of the court, the army, and the household, and senators and magistrates came daily and offered their respectful homage before the dead sovereign, in the same manner that they were wont to do when he was alive. His body, according to his last request, had been transported to Constantinople. There, laid upon his golden bed, in one of the apartments of the palace, where all the symbols of greatness were still around him; arrayed in the purple and the diadem, his remains received these last marks of affection and devotion; and when flattery could please no longer, it was made evident that Constantine was a sovereign, who reigned over the hearts of his people not only while living, but after his death.

18. The triumphant career and peaceful death of this Emperor furnish a striking contrast with that of each of his rivals, who all at length fell beneath his sword, and left no relics of their race behind them. This circumstance can scarcely be ascribed to any of those natural causes, which influence the fortunes of men and of nations. The true cause of his success will most easily be found in that providential arrangement, which chose him as a fit instrument for carrying on its own designs, and which led him first to avoid the guilt of persecution, and afterwards to embrace the persecuted faith.

19. It is worthy of attention, that all those emperors who lent their aid at this period to the work of persecution, died in a miserable manner. And though their end was not exactly like that of Maximin, their fate may be considered as

significant of the judgments of a retributive Providence. Diocletian, as it has been noticed in this history, survived his edict only a few years, dying wretchedly in his retirement, a spectator of the miseries that had fallen upon his family, and, as it is believed by some, by an act of suicide. Maximian Herculeus, his first colleague in the empire, having taken up arms in defence of his son Maxentius, perished at an early period of the cival war between the rival emperors; and his end is equally remarkable. He had seized a considerable treasure at Arles, and scattered it among the soldiers with profusion, to renew their old attachment to his service. Being, however, pursued by Constantine with a superior force he took refuge in Marseilles, where he might long have defied the power of the besiegers, if the garrison had not delivered him up a prisoner to purchase their own pardon. Notwithstanding that Constantine had married his daughter Fausta, he was sentenced to die, but anticipated his fate by strangling himself with his own hands (A.D. 310). Galerius, as we have already seen, died a death similar to that of Herod, being eaten up of worms the year following (A.D. 311). His adopted favourite, Severus, on whom he had bestowed the title of Augustus, in preference to Constantine, had been treacherously lured by Maximian from his safe retreat at Ravenna, and, being carried a captive to Rome, was there put to death by having his veins opened (A.D. 307). Licinius, the latest of the persecutors, had at first joined with Constantine in proclaiming toleration to Christianity; but soon after he had established himself in power, he threw off the mask, and raised a severe persecution in some parts of the East. But the same fate which had attended the rest of the persecuting emperors of this age soon overtook him also. His alliance had been cemented with Constantine, after a short rupture, by marrying Constantia, his sister; and for about eight years this alliance was not disturbed. But at the end of this period, this compact was broken by the ambition of Licinius. The rival candidates for power appeared again in the field; and the latter was defeated at Chrysopolis. He was sent a prisoner to Thessalonica, and his death took place soon after, either in a tumult of the soldiers, or by a decree of the Senate (A.D. 324).

20. Whatever may be thought of the general character and

conduct of Constantine, or of some of the actions of his reign, it cannot be denied that he far surpassed all those who preceded him, in the display of those virtues which most adorn the successful warrior and the good sovereign; he must be acknowledged also, to have been one of the fittest agents to whom the great work could have been entrusted, of advancing the progress of Christianity, and its welfare in all external circumstances. Some acts of cruelty and severity, he may perhaps be justly charged with, of which, however, at this distance of time, we can form no very clear judgment. His expenses also in building his new city, made him too ready to add more to the burden of taxes, than was quite compatible with the welfare of the empire. But he is admitted, upon the whole, to have been truly a great prince, of a courteous and obliging temper, free from the notorious vices which had distinguished so many of his predecessors; and with a large share of what may be called peculiarly, Christian virtues. He was kind to all, and especially charitable to the poor; large, and even profuse in his gifts. He manifested an extraordinary solicitude for the peace and welfare of the church, and expressed for its ministers throughout his reign, the most sincere and honourable regard. Though some of the heathen historians have aspersed his memory, and impugned the motives of his conversion, for reasons which are too obvious, yet another of them, Aurelius Victor, who flourished at this period, has extolled not only his learning, eloquence, and affability, but sums up his character by observing, "that had Constantine only prescribed due limits to his bounty, and ambition, and to those enticements by which great minds are hurried away in a too eager pursuit of glory, he would have come nearer to a god than to a man."

SUMMARY OF ERA THE SIXTH.

1. The family of Constantine; his early history.—2. His personal qualities; his situation described at the death of Constantius.—3. He is raised to the rank of Cæsar in the empire, with a fourth part of the sovereignty.—4. Engages in a war with Maxentius.—5. His critical situation at this period; an extraordinary sign appears to him and his army; his vision; makes a new standard, the Labarum, which is carried at the head of his forces; the defeat and death of Maxentius.—6. Undertakes a war with the Gothic tribes, and conquers.—7. Contests the empire with Licinius, and reigns alone after his defeat.—8. He lays the foundation of a new capital of the East at Byzantium.—9. Builds the city with great splendour, and dedicates it.—10. Constantine favours Christianity.—11. His treatment of the Christian bishops.—12. Gives proofs of the sincerity of his conversion.—13. His conduct towards Paganism; shuts up some of the temples, &c.—14. Constantine summons a great council at Nice.—15. He takes measures to extend and protect Christianity in several quarters.—16. He defers his baptism; probable reasons for this delay; is baptized in his last illness, and dies near Nicomedia.—17. Extraordinary honours are paid to him after his death.—18. The good fortune of Constantine, in contrast with his predecessors, and to what circumstance it is to be ascribed.—19. The remarkable end of all the persecutors of Christianity during his reign.—20. The services which he rendered to Christianity; his defects and virtues; testimony of Aurelius Victor to his great merits.

ERA THE SEVENTH.

THE LIFE OF THEODOSIUS THE GREAT.

THE FINAL OVERTHROW OF THE PAGAN RELIGION; AND THE SETTLEMENT OF THE GOTHS IN THE EASTERN EMPIRE.

INTRODUCTION.

1. The glory of the Roman State at the death of Constantine, was beginning in some degree to decline. His personal merits, as a sovereign and a conqueror, were so great, that during his lifetime no strong symptoms of danger were observable. But after his decease, it became apparent, that Constantinople flourished at the expense of Rome; and that this division of the empire into two separate seats of government, was a measure which, instead of strengthening it against the barbarian incursions, served only to render both parts of it weaker.

2. This evil was not remedied by the character or administration of the three sons, whom Constantine left to inherit his power. To the eldest of these, who bore the name of his father, was assigned the provinces of Britain, Spain, Gaul, and a part of Africa. He reigned scarcely three years, having fallen by treachery, while engaged in a contest with his brother Constans, near Aquileia (A.D. 340). But the latter did not survive the fruits of his victory more than ten years; he was cut off in a conspiracy, formed by Magnentius—an ambitious soldier of German extraction (A.D. 350). His surviving brother, Constantius, now left the only legitimate heir of the dominions of Constantine, was not slow to assert his rights, and to punish the usurper and assassin, who being defeated in all his plans, and driven

to despair, laid violent hands on himself. Thus, all the divided provinces of the empire were again peaceably reunited under one prince, within three years from the death of Constans (A.D. 353).

3. Constantius, who was the second son of his great father, had hitherto possessed only that fifth portion of the empire, which was included under the name of Mysia, Thrace, Asia, the East, and Egypt. In addition, therefore, to the territory of his elder brother, he was now Lord of Italy, Illyricum, Macedonia, Greece, the ports that border upon the Euxine, and the remainder of Africa. But this vast extent of dominion, was the inheritance of a prince, who possessed even a smaller portion of the virtues of his father, than either of his brothers. He was neither illustrious as a soldier or a sovereign; and was governed entirely by Eusebius, his chamberlain, and the eunuchs of the palace—a race of contemptible beings who were now beginning to acquire that ascendancy in the eastern court, which they long maintained. Excelling in the arts of flattery and intrigue, they were thus enabled to assume the entire control of the councils of Constantius, and to take advantage of his fears, his indolence, and his vanity.

4. This feeble reign of eight years, in which he was the sole Emperor of the Roman world, and of 24 years in which his authority was shared with one or other of his brothers, was distinguished by no political event of importance. It was chiefly memorable for a severe persecution endured by Athanasius and his followers, in defence of the great principles of that religious creed, of which the chief tenets had been framed at the Council of Nice, under the auspices of Constantine the Great. His degenerate son, so far from following his noble example, became the great patron of the followers of Arius. The venerable man who at this time filled the episcopal chair of Egypt, at Alexandria, was thrice driven into exile; and, for nearly twenty years, suffered a relentless persecution, from one or other of the royal tyrants (from A.D. 336 to A.D. 356). His followers were exposed to every indignity and hardship, and not a few of them became martyrs to the faith which they professed. Alexandria suffered most in this persecution (A.D. 356); but the whole of the eastern provinces groaned under the religious hostility of a prince, and of a sect, whose

virulence and bigotry were but little inferior to that which had been shown by their pagan predecessors.

5. The death of Constantius took place (A.D. 361), just in time to save him from the dishonour of having the sceptre snatched from his hands by Julian, his cousin, who had been raised to the rank of Cæsar (A.D. 355), and had distinguished himself by his great talents as a general in the wars of Gaul (A.D. 355–357). The empire now returned, by a strange revolution, to the only surviving descendant of the Constantines; and to him who was the son of the patrician, Constantius, a brother of the great hero himself. Gallus, the brother of Julian, had previously fallen a sacrifice to the just resentment of Constantius (A.D. 354). Julian was educated at Athens, having been sent there as to a place of honourable banishment; and thus become from his youth in heart a pagan philosopher. He possessed that lively wit, which united to a habit of intense application, must have ensured distinction in any rank of life. But the most artful dissimulation was mingled with his character; and this manifested itself more strongly as he approached the pinnacle of greatness. He then boldly confessed himself an unbeliever in Christianity, and a proselyte to the religion of his ancestors. Disavowing the principles of persecution, he laboured, however, to bring back Paganism by every artifice in his power. Among the subtle measures which this Apostate Emperor (as he is called) adopted, to discredit the truth of Christianity, was an attempt to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem, it being the common persuasion, that this was an impossible deed, according to the truth of prophecy. (Luke xxi. 24.) Julian made great efforts to give the lie to this prediction. The Jews were invited from all parts to return to the holy mountain of their fathers, and numbers were set to work in laying the foundations of the new temple. The greatest enthusiasm was displayed by many of the subjects of the Emperor, to assist him in this enterprise, and no worldly means were left wanting to ensure its success. But if we may believe the testimony of more than one of the writers of the same age, the attempt was entirely frustrated by such indications of the Divine displeasure as could not be mistaken. An earthquake—a whirlwind, and an eruption of balls of fire, so discouraged and terrified the workmen, that the scheme

was for the time laid aside. The attention of Julian was now called to the still more pressing enterprise of a war with the Persians. He purposed, however, as soon as this was finished, to renew the operations at Jerusalem, and declared, that he would then wage a far more active warfare against Christianity, than he had yet done. But the designs of the Emperor were cut short in a manner that he had not expected; for while he was leading his troops, with sanguine hopes of soon overturning the throne of Persia, and just as he was on the point of obtaining a great victory over Sapor, his formidable foe, a javelin discharged from some unknown hand pierced his side. The story runs, that when he found himself mortally wounded, he took a handful of the blood which flowed from his wound, and throwing it into the air, exclaimed, "Vicisti, O Galilæe!" "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!"

6. The brilliant career of this Apostate prince was thus terminated, after a reign of somewhat less than two years as Emperor (A.D. 363). He was succeeded by Jovian, or Jovinian, his captain-general of the imperial guards. This reign, which promised to be a beneficial one, and worthy of a sovereign, who was sincerely attached to Chistianity and its institutions, was closed suddenly, after a period of only eight months, by an accident of an uncertain kind; some ascribing his death to a supper upon poisonous mushrooms; others to his having slept in a room that was loaded with the fumes of charcoal.

7. Valentinian was next chosen to govern the empire,—a tribune of the Salarii—whose bold conduct in maintaining his principles as a Christian, in the presence of Julian, had occasioned his banishment. With the aid of his brother, Valens, whom he chose as his colleague, assigning to him the eastern division of the empire, he laboured successfully to sustain the glory of the Roman arms. He himself conquered the Alemanni, and other tribes of the Germans, who had invaded Gaul (A.D. 368); and the forces of Valens reduced the Gothic nations, who were now threatening the empire (A.D. 367–369), to such a state of submission, that they remained quiet for several years afterwards.

8. An event happened nearly about this time in the natural world, that might have been thought ominous of those revolutions with which the political world was

threatened. In the second year of the reign of Valentinian and Valens, on the morning of the 25th of July (A.D. 365), the whole of the Roman Empire was almost at the same moment shaken by an earthquake, and so violent was the impression on the sea as well as the land, that at many places on the coasts of the Mediterranean, large ships were left dry on the shores, and a considerable extent of its bed was exposed. But the tide soon returned with the weight of a deluge; and the inundation was of a most destructive kind, particularly in Egypt, where at Alexandria not less than 50,000 persons were swept away by the waters.

9. But the political calamities, of which this inundation were a faint type and sign, did not come immediately; and the reign of Valetinian was upon the whole favourable to the welfare of the empire and of Christianity. It closed in a premature manner, ten years after that remarkable event just referred to. He ended his life in an ignoble and awful manner, dying in one of those paroxysms of rage to which he was unhappily subject; and while reproaching the ambassadors of the Quadi, for the perfidy their nation had shown in violating a treaty of peace (A.D. 375).

10. Shortly after his death, the empire sustained a severe blow from the movements of the Huns; who, spreading themselves over the regions north of the Danube, forced the Gothic nations who were settled there, to seek a shelter within the boundary of the Roman tertitory. The imprudence of Valens and his ministers, who consented too hastily, to admit as friends within the heart of the empire, a large body of dangerous guests, soon discovered itself. They shook off the yoke which they had professed themselves, at first, willing to wear, and broke out into a revolt (A.D. 377), which, though at first suppressed, was afterwards attended with much worse consequences. At Hadrianople a conflict at length took place, in which the Roman arms sustained as great a defeat as had formerly befallen them in the fields of Cannæ. A large proportion of their forces were destroyed, and Valens himself perished amidst the flames of a cottage, to which his soldiers had carried him in a wounded state, from the field of battle (A.D. 378).

11. At this disastrous period, Gratian, the eldest son of Valentinian, found himself alone in the possession of the empire—a position which required at once an able coad-

jutor, whose talents and virtues might be adequate to the crisis. The Goths were ravaging the eastern provinces; and in the west the German barbarians were threatening a descent upon Gaul. But the wise choice of the young Emperor was soon directed to an individual who was, perhaps, the only one in the empire, at this time, exactly suited for the emergency. His name and deeds constitute a very marked era in the fortunes of Rome; and are, therefore, worthy of a more lengthened detail in this history of some of its most distinguished great men.

THE LIFE OF THEODOSIUS.

1. THEODOSIUS FLAVIUS, justly styled in all ages the Great, was a native of the same province and of the same city in Spain, as his illustrious predecessor Trajan. The city of Italica, founded by Scipio Africanus for the wounded veterans of Italy, situated about three miles from Seville, has the honour of having been the birth-place of both these famous Emperors. Whether Theodosius was related to Trajan or not, is a fact of a more doubtful nature, though there are strong reasons which favour this belief. The father of Theodosius had been an eminent general, whose exploits in Britain and Africa were celebrated during the reign of Valentinian. Under his standard his son learned the arts of war; acquired the habits and constitution of a soldier; and in various conflicts with the Scots, the Saxons and the Moors, attained the rank and reputation of a courageous officer. He was speedily raised to the highest place in the army, and became Duke of Mœsia—a post of honour in which he obtained a great and important victory over the Sarmatians, and thus stamped his fame as a general. But at this stage his fortunes received a check, from the calamities which fell upon his father in Africa. Theodosius the elder, after having brought this province into subjection, fell a victim to some of the subtle artifices of his enemies; and through the influence of those corrupt ministers, who ruled the court and abused the confidence of Gratian, the Emperor thus became jealous of the greatness of his general, and suffered him to be put to death at Carthage (A.D. 376).

2. This event, which not only saddened but disgusted the mind of the younger Theodosius, had the effect of making him for a while desirous to renounce the path of public glory; and having obtained permission to quit his command in the army, he retired to the quiet seclusion and enjoyment of the ample patrimony which he inherited in Spain. Amidst the peaceful employments of his farm, that lay in a fruitful district between Valladolid and Segovia, a place still famous for its breed of sheep, the future lord of the Roman world, spent several months as a private character, devoting himself entirely to the pleasures of domestic and rural life. But his virtues and fame had left too strong an impression upon the minds of all men, to be overlooked at a time when the national glory was in danger. From this obscurity, therefore, the retired hero was recalled by a summons from the imperial court, which invited him to assume the dignity of the empire of the East. It was in the thirtieth year of his age (A.D. 379), that Theodosius was thus invested with the purple; and the hopes of all were at once fixed upon the future hero, whose countenance strongly reminded them of Trajan, but whose mind and manners were still more akin to that Emperor, who was still remembered as one of the greatest of the Roman princes.

3. The first work to which his military prowess directed itself, was the vindication of the Roman honour against those barbarians who had given it so fatal a stain at Hadrianople. The loss of forty thousand Romans on that occasion, would have been a motive sufficient to arouse the energies of a hero far less gifted than Theodosius. But caution, as well as courage were now necessary, to the successful prosecution of a war with a host of barbarians flushed with victory, and who were driving the affrighted multitudes of the provinces before them like a flock of sheep. Theodosius, however, knew how to recruit the scattered forces of the empire, and to act as the firm and faithful guardian of the republic. He pitched his camp at Thessalonica, a station from whence he could watch the movements of the barbarians with most advantage. The garrisons of the cities in the neighbourhood were speedily fortified and strengthened. Order and discipline were restored among his troops; and by accustoming them to

make frequent sallies upon their enemies, whenever favourable opportunities occurred, their courage was by degrees revived; and they could again venture to look their enemies in the face, and rely upon the strength and spirit of the Roman arms. Thus, in four successive campaigns, the glory of the nation was as fully regained as in the days of Scipio; and though the Emperor was continually suffering from a disease of long standing, yet nothing could abate the ardour, skill and perseverance, with which he directed his mind to the public service.

4. Various methods were adopted by this wise prince to strengthen and secure his conquests over the enemies with whom he had to contend. Taking advantage of the divisions which often arose among these bands of savage robbers; purchasing the good-will of some of them with gifts and promises, and meeting others boldly in the field, the valour, policy and good fortune of Theodosius conspired, after a time, to subject the whole of them to his power. One of the first to surrender was Modar, a prince of his nation, who enlisted as a bold and faithful champion in the service of the Emperor. By his assistance an army of his countrymen was surprised and destroyed. An immense spoil, with four thousand waggons, was thus brought into the imperial camp (A.D. 382). Another leader of the Gothic forces, named Athanaric, found it also prudent to submit, and to accept of an advantageous treaty. Theodosius afterwards entertained this barbarian sovereign at Constantinople with great magnificence, and admitted him to his confidence and friendship. Athanaric, when he had surveyed the splendid buildings of the city, its spacious harbour, the innumerable vessels, the multitude of foreigners from all nations, and the arms and discipline of the troops, was so overwhelmed with astonishment by all he saw of the greatness of the conqueror, that he could not help exclaiming, in a transport of admiration, "I now behold what I never could believe, the glories of this stupendous capital. The Emperor of the Romans is a god upon earth; and the presumptuous man who dares to lift a hand against him is guilty of his own blood!" After this submission of their leader, each of the independent chieftains hastened to procure a treaty of friendship for themselves; and in little

less than four years from the death of Valens, a final capitulation took place of all the Gothic tribes who had invaded the empire during his reign (A.D. 382).

5. A few years after this peace (A.D. 386), a fresh attempt was made to disturb the empire, by a large body of the Ostrogoths, who assembled on the banks of the Lower Danube, and prepared to force their way across the river. But they found their progress checked, by a triple line of galleys, forming an impenetrable chain of two miles and a half along the stream. Persevering in their attempt to obtain a passage, the greater part of them were overwhelmed or dispersed by the Roman navy. Alatheus, their leader, perished in the action, and is said to have been slain by the Emperor himself. The remainder of them, who gained the shore, were compelled to implore his clemency; and they, with the rest of their kindred tribes, became the subjects and servants of the people whom they had invaded.

6. To secure in future more effectually the safety of the empire on its northern frontier, the alliance of the tribes, who still remained in Thrace and Phrygia, was purchased by the conversion of large tracts of land; by a distribution of corn and cattle; and an exemption from tribute during a certain period. From this body, who were still under the government of their own laws and chieftains, an army of forty thousand men was selected and maintained for the service of the Roman state. They were termed the Federati, and had the privilege of wearing golden collars. It was supposed that time, education, and the influence of Christianity, would gradually soften and improve the manners of these barbarians; and that they would become at length blended in their habits and interests, with the people who had taken them under their protection. And during the reign of Theodosius these measures were so far successful, that no outbreak of any importance occurred among them, and for the most part they acted on all occasions as his loyal subjects.

7. The Emperor had soon occasion to try their valour and sincerity, in his contest with a rival candidate for the empire, named Maximus. By birth also a Spaniard, and formerly the fellow-soldier of Theodosius, he had looked with a jealous eye upon the elevation of one with whom he

was formerly associated in the same army. Having the command of the forces in Britain, he hoisted there his standard of revolt, and led a formidable army into Gaul; where he soon after succeeded in procuring the assassination of the feeble Emperor Gratian, whose Roman troops had become disaffected to his service, in consequence of the favours which he had lavished upon his German guards (A.D. 383).

8. The events connected with this revolt, and the death of Gratian, had passed so rapidly, that Theodosius had no time to prevent them, or to come to the succour of his colleague in the empire. The eastern provinces also required his presence; and the western were already in the power of the usurper. For a time, therefore, Theodosius felt himself constrained to dissemble his resentment, and to enter into a treaty by which the governments of Spain, Gaul, and Britain, were resigned to Maximus. By the same treaty also, Valentinian, the brother of Gratian, was to be secured in the possession of Italy, Africa, and the Western Illyricum (A.D. 383). But four years scarcely elapsed, when Maximus, aiming at a larger dominion, invaded Italy with a formidable army. Valentinian fled precipitately from Milan, and took refuge with Theodosius at Thessalonica. He was accompanied by his mother Justina, and her daughter Galla. The tears and beauty of this young princess pleaded powerfully in the cause of Valentinian, and captivated the heart of Theodosius, who made her his wife, and the celebration of the royal nuptials was a sufficient indication, that he would soon lead his army into the field against the usurper of his brother's rights.

9. Maximus was now at the head of a brave and well-disciplined army; and had encamped himself near the city of Siscia in Pannonia, which was strongly defended by the broad and rapid current of the river Save. The forces of Theodosius had to be collected and marched to this distant quarter; and these preparations occupied a period of about two months. His army on this occasion was chiefly composed of the fierce bands of Huns, Alani and Goths, who had enlisted in his service, and proved his best warriors in their attack upon the camp of Maximus. They had been formed into squadrons of archers; and, being well practised in all the rapid movements of the Tartar tribes, they became

more than a match for the steady valour of the Germans and Gauls. They spurred their foaming horses into the river, dashed through the torrent, and rushed impetuously upon the enemy, who were drawn up to meet them. After a sharp conflict, the soldiers of Maximus threw down their arms; and their leader hurrying away in flight to Aquileia, was quickly followed by the victors.

10. He had scarcely time to reach the city, and close the gates behind him, when his pursuers arrived, to claim their prey. The soldiers speedily forced an entrance. Maximus was soon delivered into their hands, and, being stripped of all his ensigns of royalty, he was led as a malefactor to the camp of Theodosius. The Emperor pitied the victim; but a sense of duty, as well as the zeal of the soldiers, constrained him to refuse the prayer of the supplicant for mercy, and to yield him up as a sacrifice to the memory of Gratian, and to the just resentment of the army. He was quickly withdrawn from the Emperor's presence, and his head severed from his body. His son Victor, on whom he had vainly bestowed the title of Augustus, shared also his father's fate; and a formidable civil war was thus put a stop to, with less difficulty and bloodshed than might have been apprehended (A.D. 388).

11. Although on this occasion the generosity of Theodosius was not shewn in sparing the life of the usurper—an action that would have been inconsistent with the peace of the empire—yet, in other respects, it was displayed in a remarkable manner. The adherents of his rival were, for the most part, treated with forbearance; and only those who had been the most active supporters of his cause were executed as traitors. The sufferers in this war, who had been deprived of their lands, not only found these restored to them, but received also a donation fully equal to the losses which they had sustained. A circumstance still more deserving of praise, in the character of Theodosius as a Roman emperor and a conqueror, was his treament of the remaining family of Maximus. By his liberality the mother of his enemy was furnished with ample means of subsistence, and her daughters were generously educated.

12. At the conclusion of this war, the Emperor retired with his family to the palace of Milan, which had now become the favourite residence of the princes of the West.

Here he spent the winter months, attending closely to the condition of the provinces, which had suffered from the invasion of Maximus. The situation of this city at the foot of the Alps, made it a convenient place of residence for the emperors, by enabling them to watch more closely than they could do at Rome, the motions of the barbarian tribes of Germany. On this account it had become, from the beginning of the fourth century (when the empire was partitioned), a place of more frequent resort with the sovereigns of Rome, than even the capital itself. Its splendour soon vied with the two imperial cities, and it was strongly fortified with a double wall. From the time of this visit, Milan also rose into high esteem with Theodosius; and he divided his time between it, and the great capital of the East. But the ancient home of the empire and its glories could not be forgotten, and early in the spring he made his triumphal entry into Rome as a conqueror, and in the manner of his great predecessors.

13. During this visit to the ancient capital, Theodosius was not unmindful of the first duty, which, as a Christian prince, he owed to that people whom he governed. About eight years previously (A.D. 380), he had been solemnly baptized in the faith of the Holy Trinity, by Acholius, the Bishop of Thessalonica. From that period, he declared his determination, not only to uphold the orthodox faith which he had embraced, in opposition to the heresy of Arius and his followers, but also to discountenance the profession of Paganism. An edict was soon after published at Constantinople (A.D. 381), which forbad those who refused to subscribe to the Nicene Creed, from any longer possessing the churches, which they had enjoyed the use of, under the patronage of the Arian Emperors, Constantius and Valens. For the space of 40 years (A.D. 340–380), Arianism had been dominant in the imperial city of the East—and in its hundred churches, and even among its mechanics and slaves, the profound doctrine of the Trinity had become a subject of bitter controversy in the pulpit, or of vulgar dispute in the streets. Those who believed in this doctrine as it is now taught and believed, for the most part throughout the Christian world, were here at this time, subjected to grievous oppressions, and could only meet for the common purposes of religion in conventicles, or places

not recognised by the laws. But the day of retribution came with the reign of Theodosius, and in the space of fifteen years (A.D. 380–395) he issued at least fifteen edicts, in defence, or maintenance of that creed, which was henceforth to take its place throughout the Christian church as the orthodox faith. Arianism now experienced the fate of a proscribed religion, was branded as heresy, and its followers subjected to penalties, though not severer than had been inflicted upon the professors of the Nicene Creed, in the days of Valens. They were excluded from the churches which had been usurped for a time, and in the room of Damophilus, the Arian Bishop of Constantinople, Gregory of Nazienzum was placed for a short interval in that post of honour (A.D. 381)—a Father highly distinguished in the annals of the church for the eloquence and piety of his writings; but which shone forth most conspicuously from that retirement to which he was driven back, to escape from the rage of party factions that unhappily embroiled the church at this period.

14. The zeal of the Emperor for the orthodox faith was still further shewn, in his summoning a council of one hundred and fifty bishops to meet at the imperial city (A.D. 381). By the great majority of these it was determined that the doctrines of the Catholic church were truly embodied in the creed of Nice. But the Deity of the Holy Ghost was now also declared to be a part of the faith of a true Christian, in opposition to the tenets of Macedonius, who had denied the perfect equality of the third person of the Trinity with the second. Among the general councils of the church, this of Constantinople takes the second rank.

15. While the Emperor thus laboured to correct the divisions of the church in the East, his attention had been also turned to the subject of Paganism. In the same year that this great council was held, it was made criminal by law, for any to apostatize from Christianity. During the reign of Valens, when the persecution was carried on by a joint concurrence of Arians, Jews, and Gentiles, many had taken shelter in the outward profession of the old religion. To prevent this hypocrisy in future, the edict of the Emperor deprived all such apostates of that which was accounted the great privilege and birthright of a Roman—the power of making a will. About the end of the same year

(A.D. 381), it was also forbidden, under pain of proscription, to offer any of the sacrifices used in divination; for to these the Romans were still very much addicted, and the inspection of the entrails of victims, to obtain a knowledge of futurity, was one of the strongholds of Paganism in the minds of the people. It was therefore enacted, that none should approach the temples for any such purpose; that the will of the Supreme Deity should not be sought after by execrable charms and conjurations, but that he should be worshipped and invoked only by pure and chaste prayers.

16. After the defeat of Maximus, measures of a still more decided character were resolved upon, to discourage and destroy the remaining superstitions. Cynegius, the prætorian prefect of the East, received a special commission, by which he was empowered to shut up the heathen temples, to destroy the images of idolatrous worship, to abolish the privileges of the priests, and to confiscate all the property which had belonged to them, for the benefit of the Emperor, the army, and the church (A.D. 387). In various other parts of the Empire, the imperial commands were to the same effect; and they were everywhere zealously executed. A few years earlier than this, Martin, bishop of Tours, was a great destroyer of idols, and of the consecrated trees throughout his diocese; and in Syria, Marcellus also about this time waged an unceasing warfare in Apamea, against all the relics of heathen superstition. In one of these assaults, this excellent bishop was met by a body of infuriated rustics, and fell a martyr to the cause in which he was engaged. Shortly after this (A.D. 389), the same determination to carry out the designs of the Emperor, displayed itself in Egypt—a land which had long been the fountain of impurity and superstition to all the nations of the East and West. The destruction of the great temple of Serapis, "the glory and the shame" of that country, forms a remarkable event in the history of this age. It was considered the pride of Alexandria, and stood on an artificial mount raised by a hundred steps above the level of the city. A quadrangular portico surrounded it; and its stately halls were filled with statues, which exhibited in perfection all the arts of sculpture. Here, too, were collected all the treasures of ancient learning. The library of the Ptolemys was replaced by 200,000 volumes—the whole collection

which had been brought from Pergamus, and the splendid gift of Marc Antony, to Queen Cleopatra. It is to be regretted, that so noble a collection should have been pillaged or destroyed, in the wreck now made of this chosen shrine of idolatry. But our sympathies can be but little for the degrading objects which marked the superstition of a place, where these treasures were deposited. Of these, the chief was an image here worshipped under the name of Serapis; whose temple and its recesses beneath, had been the scene of pollutions, typified by the statue of the god himself. He was represented in a sitting posture, having on his head a basket or bushel, and holding in his right hand an emblematic monster, with the head and body of a serpent, branching out into three tails, each of which were terminated with a dog, a lion, or a wolf. Animated by the presence of Theophilus, the bishop, a Christian soldier levelled a vigorous blow at the statue, which cleft his jaws, and set free a large number of mice, who ran out from their habitation within the sacred image. Ridicule hastened on the work of destruction, after it had begun; and the dismembered limbs of the time-honoured idol, were speedily dragged about the streets in derision, and at last, amidst the shouts of the populace, consigned to the flames in the amphitheatre.

17. This and the rest of the ruined temples, were speedily occupied by the foundations of Christian churches. Over that of Serapis, was erected a building dedicated to the honour of the Martyrs, and consecrated by the supposed relics of John the Baptist. On that of Saturn, rose another called after Arcadius, the son of the Emperor. It was hoped by the Pagans, who shewed much displeasure and opposition to these proceedings, that the Nile would avenge the violated dignity of the gods, and refuse to bestow his customary gifts upon those who had forbidden the usual sacrifices to the river deity. At first some circumstances favoured this hope; and a party of the people becoming mutinous, it was thought expedient to appeal to the Emperor, who wisely replied, that it was better to discharge our duty to the true God, than to enjoy the streams of the Nile, by endeavouring to appease him with charms and sacrifices, and the defilement of his waters (as had been customary) with human blood. But after a short delay, the river rose to such an unusual height, as to occasion the fear of a destructive, rather

than a beneficial inundation. At length, however, the stream subsided to its usual fertilizing level of sixteen cubits or thirty English feet. By these means, superstition lost much of its credit even among its former votaries; and Christianity, assisted by the strong arm of power, took entire possession of the places most devoted to Paganism; and thus, by degrees, of the hearts of the whole population.

18. In Rome, the Emperor personally superintended the work of establishing Christianity, and of overthrowing the ancient superstition, which was no easy task. On his visit to this ancient seat of idolatry, at the time to which we have before referred, Theodosius discovered that the partizans of the old faith still formed a numerous and powerful body. Gratian, a pious prince, had during his reign refused the dignity of Pontifex maximus, a title always conferred upon the Emperors, and had given other proofs of his decided attachment to Christianity. An object devoutly cherished in the Senate-house of Rome, was the goddess of Victory, represented by the statue of a majestic female standing on a globe, with flowing garments, expanded wings, and a crown of laurel in her outstretched hand. This statue and its altar, upon which wine and incense were offered whenever the Senate met together, Gratian had caused to be removed from its place, in spite of the earnest entreaties of the senators. But this Emperor felt himself too weak to carry on this struggle with a majority, whose prejudices yet ran strongly in favour of the rites of Paganism. The statues of the gods were for this reason, under his reign, spared for a while from similar indignities; and 420 temples or chapels were still left open, for the performance of the ancient ceremonies. It required the presence of such a conqueror as Theodosius, to shut them up, and to engage in the mighty work of mastering the prejudices of a people, so long addicted to their heathen superstitions.

19. There were many at this time who boldly argued, that a religion under which the republic had flourished for more than eleven hundred years, could not be abolished without great peril; and some of the senators hesitated not to declare, that the restraining of their ancient paternal rites, had been the cause of the calamities which had so visibly befallen the empire, in the invasion of the barbarians, and the desolation and wreck of some of its prin-

cipal cities. And in these complaints Symmachus took an active part, a man of great authority and eloquence. But the Emperor turned a deaf ear to all such arguments; and having called the Senate together, addressed them on the subject of Christianity. He told them that he was fully convinced of its truth, and of its being the only religion which held forth the true method of pardon and of expiation for sin, or that inculcated purity and holiness of life. He declared himself also determined to abolish all the usual sacrifices in the temples, and to devote the allowances hitherto given by the state to their maintenance, to the payment of his army. The Senate, influenced by their fears, or their respect for their monarch, ceased to prolong a fruitless opposition to his remonstrances. The question being then moved and brought to the vote, a regular division took place upon it, and the worship of Jupiter and the rest of the heathen deities was at last condemned by a large majority. The example of the Anician family presently led the way in the work of conversion, and was soon followed by others of the nobility of Rome—the Bassi, the Paulini, and the Gracchi. If we may believe the glowing language of the contemporary poet Prudentius, "the luminaries of the world, the venerable assembly of Cato's rejoiced: they were impatient to cast off the skin of the serpent—the pontifical dress; to assume the whiter robe of a holy religion, and to humble the pride of the consular fasces before the tombs of the martyrs."

20. Whether this statement is true to its full extent may be questionable, but there is no doubt as to the fact, that the decrees of the Senate now rigorously proscribed the worship of idols. After the Emperor had left Italy, it was confirmed as a law of the Roman state, that its old religion should be entirely abolished; and that all who were found guilty of practising any of its ceremonies should be subject to severe penalties, in proportion to the nature of the offence, and to the quality of the person offending (A.D. 390–392). In the last of the edicts which the Emperor issued on the subject, after he returned to Constantinople, it was constituted high treason to offer sacrifice to an image, or to consult the entrails of a victim. Burning incense to a statue was to be followed by the confiscation of the house or field where this ceremony was performed; and this, if

done without the knowledge of the owner of the place, subjected the offender to a fine of twenty-five pounds of gold, or but little less than a thousand pounds sterling of our present money. A fine, of the same amount, was also to be levied upon all who should conceal or connive at any of these idolatrous practices (A.D. 392).

The stringent laws which Theodosius thus adopted to secure the overthrow of Paganism proved at least his sincerity, and received at that time the admiration of the Christian world. But the reader's attention must now be directed to some other important transactions of his reign which have not yet been noticed.

21. In the year previous to the Emperor's triumph over Maximus, or about two years before his visit to Rome, the city of Antioch became the scene of a violent outbreak of popular feeling against its sovereign and his laws (A.D. 388). Theodosius was preparing to celebrate the decennalia, or tenth year of his reign, and the fifth of his eldest son, Arcadius; and his coffers having been drained by the expenses of the Gothic wars, new taxes were levied upon his subjects. Antioch at this time was the metropolis of Syria, the third city in the Empire, and had enjoyed the sunshine of the imperial favour. The honour it justly claimed, in having been the first city where the followers of Jesus received their distinctive title of "Christians" (Acts xi. 26), was one which had never yet been forfeited; and it could now boast that its population contained a hundred thousand who bore the same name; one thousand of whom were supported out of the Christian offerings. More than half, however, of its people were yet unbelievers or pagans; and it always contained in it a great number of profligate persons and strangers from all quarters. Through the agency of these many of the inhabitants were now stirred up; and their indignation at the royal impost was shewn in an extremely insolent manner. The statues of the Emperor, of his first excellent wife Flacilla, and of his two sons, Arcadius and Honorius, were thrown down from their pedestals, broken in pieces, and contumeliously dragged about the streets. The arrival of a body of archers quickly suppressed this tumult; and the inhabitants, now struck with a panic of fear, awaited the sentence of that guilt, in which the whole population seemed in some degree impli-

cated. The news of this outrage soon reaching the Emperor, awakened his strong and just resentment. After a chilling suspense of twenty-four days (for Antioch and Constantinople were separated by a distance of eight hundred miles), the Emperor expressed by his messengers his sense of the indignity which had been offered to himself and his family, by a sentence of great severity. The city was ordered to be degraded from its former rank to that of a village. It was to be stripped of its privileges and its revenues, and all its principal inhabitants were to be arrested and examined as criminals, before the tribunal of the two commissioners, Hellebichus and Cæsarius. Nothing could exceed the consternation and dismay of the whole people on this occasion. The baths, the circus, and the theatres were all shut up; the noblest and most wealthy of the citizens were led daily in chains to the court of justice; and some of them subjected to the scourge, that their own guilt or that of others, in this sedition, might be more fully brought to light.

22. The eloquent Chrysostom, whose fame as a preacher in this city had already won for him that admiration, which has transmitted itself to all ages, in his title of "the golden mouth," ascended the pulpit of the Cathedral, or Old Church, on the eighth day of this calamity. His powerful description of the terrors which the city was then suffering, is perhaps one of the most striking pictures which has ever been drawn. "Heretofore," said he, "our city was shaken (with an earthquake), but now the very foundations of every heart quivers, and we all see death only before our eyes! We live in constant terror, and endure the penalty of Cain. * * * * Wherever any one looks abroad, whether upon the ground or upon the walls, whether upon the columns of the city or upon his neighbours, he seems to see night and deep gloom, so full is all of melancholy! There is a silence big with horror, and loneliness everywhere. * * * All men seem like stones; they exhibit the profoundest silence, yea such a silence as if their enemies had come upon them, and consumed them all at once by fire and sword."*

* A translation of the Homilies to the people of Antioch, on the Statues, was published at Oxford, 1842, in the Library of the Fathers, by the compiler of the present work.

23. But this state of despair was only a temporary one. An embassy was dispatched to Theodosius, headed by Flavian, their aged and beloved Bishop; and so effectually did the pastor plead the cause of his flock, that the Emperor, after a short expostulation, consented to receive the apology and petition of the suppliants; and yielded to the duty which was so warmly urged upon him, of exercising the noble and Christian duty of forgiveness. His former sentence was entirely revoked. The prisons were thrown open, and the citizens restored to their former privileges and enjoyments. The illustrious preacher, taking up a different strain, had to congratulate his audience, that an event had been realized, which was almost beyond expectation; and that the calamity, instead of producing the results so much dreaded, had served to confer honour alike upon the city, the bishop, and the Emperor.

Theodosius merited, indeed, the warmest encomium for his clemency and forbearance. His conduct in all respects was here deserving of admiration. He commended the senate of Constantinople, who had joined their intercession to those of the ambassadors on behalf of the distressed; and besides expressing to the bishop his warmest sense of respect and gratitude, he bestowed upon Hilarion, the advocate, the government of Palestine. The universal applause that followed this action testified the sentiments which pervaded the heart of a mighty empire. A thousand new statues, instead of those which had been thrown down and dishonoured, were speedily erected to the clemency of a monarch, who thus indulged the noblest feelings of the heart, and gave the best illustration of the power of Christianity. Never, perhaps, was the triumph of human mercy over human justice more complete. It was an example to which our great dramatist might well have applied the following lines:—

"The quality of mercy is not strain'd;
It droppeth, as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice bless'd;
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes:
'T is mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown.
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;

But mercy is above this sceptered sway,
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice."—SHAKSPEARE.

24. From a scene so pleasing and instructive in the life of the great Theodosius, it is an ungrateful task to the historian to turn to an incident in his life of an entirely opposite kind, though the sequel of it will tend to shew his reverence for the ordinances of a religion, whose precepts he was not always equally mindful to obey.

Thessalonica was another great city of the East—the metropolis of the Illyrian provinces, and had been carefully secured by the vigilance of the Emperor, and by a strong garrison during the dangers of the Gothic war. But in the year A.D. 390, Botheric, the general of the troops, had, in the execution of his duty there, thrown into prison a charioteer, of very profligate character, who was, however, a great favourite with the populace. Resenting the conduct of the general, and galled by some previous disputes respecting their rights, they rose in a mass; and the garrison at this time having been drained of its chief forces to supply the Italian war, Botheric, and several of his principal officers, were barbarously put to death, and their mangled bodies treated with the utmost ignominy. The Emperor was at this time at Milan; and on hearing of this act of audacious cruelty, his temper was aroused to a more than ordinary degree of indignation. Without waiting long to deliberate, the messengers of death were dispatched with their orders to take full vengeance upon the guilty city. Rufinus, the prætorian prefect of the East, an odious favourite, and a man of cruel and malignant disposition, but whose vices were covered by a mask of deep dissimulation, was the Emperor's chief adviser and instigator in this work, and exasperated him to this deed of fury by his representations. At the intercession of the bishops, however, the Emperor had almost relented, and orders were again issued to countermand the execution of the sentence when it was too late. In the Emperor's name, his messengers of death, following probably their own devices and that of Rufinus, invited the population to the Circus; and while they were unsuspiciously awaiting some important disclosure, a bar-

barian cohort inclosed the building on all sides, and a promiscuous carnage followed. Strangers and natives of every age and sex, the guilty and the innocent, were thus alike slaughtered for three hours by the Gothic soldiers, who without mercy avenged the death of their murdered countrymen. Seven thousand persons at least were thus sacrificed. No prayers or bribes could induce these executioners to spare a single victim, until they had completed the number of heads required by the sentence. One instance will suffice to show the horrors of this scene. A foreign merchant, wholly unconnected with the sedition, seeing his two sons about to suffer, offered his own person and an estate to save only one of them from death, and his suit was listened to; but while he was deliberating and arguing with himself which he ought to redeem (loving them both equally well), the soldiers cut short this doubt by plunging their daggers into the breasts of both the youths at the same instant.

25. This horrible transaction was one which tarnished for awhile the glory and humanity of the Emperor; and by none of his subjects was this event more deeply deplored than by Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, who had long enjoyed his confidence and esteem. This faithful and apostolic man was overwhelmed with horror at the news of it. Retiring to his country residence, he immediately wrote a letter of remonstrance to Theodosius, and exhorted him to a sincere and deep repentance for the great crime which he had committed. He also warned him, that he himself dared not any longer to hold communion with him in the public offices of religion as before. The Emperor's conscience became exceedingly alarmed; but he still resolved to present himself as usual in the church, with the intention of imploring pardon for his conduct. Ambrose, however, stopped him in the porch, reproving him with great feeling and boldness for his guilt, and pointing out his unfitness to approach the holy table. And when the Emperor ventured to urge the example of David in extenuation of his offence, the bishop's reply was—"You have imitated David in his crime, imitate then his repentance." This declaration produced a salutary effect upon the mind of the offender. He returned to his palace, and for eight months continued to fulfil the conditions of the humblest penitent,

being excluded from the church, and wearing only mourning garments. At the end of this period, as the festival of Christmas was approaching, he earnestly implored to be relieved from the censures of the Church, and to be again admitted within the sanctuary; expressing also the deepest sorrow that he had been deprived so long of this privilege. Ambrose listened to his petition with reluctance, but at length, to test the sincerity of his repentance, proposed a condition which, in all ages, must be considered as the wisest that could have been thought of. An interval of thirty days was in future to elapse after the Emperor's signing a warrant for the execution of criminals, or for the forfeiture of estates, before it could be put into execution. At the end of this period it was again to receive a fresh signature before it could be carried into effect. Time was thus allowed for the more violent heat of anger to pass away, and a sufficient security was given, that respite or pardon would be granted, where it was consistent with the rules of justice or of mercy. Theodosius willingly accepted this condition, and having then received from the bishop a sentence of reconciliation and pardon, he proceeded to the church, where his behaviour was such as sufficiently expressed to all, his grief for the crime in which he had been involved. Repeating a portion of one of the penitential psalms, smiting his hand upon his forehead, and shedding many tears, he implored the forgiveness of God and of man; and afterwards received the holy communion in the same place that was allotted to all communicants at Milan, outside the rails of the altar. The conduct of Ambrose, in every part of this transaction, appeared so highly commendable to the Emperor himself, that when he returned to Constantinople he expressed the warmest admiration of it. He declared to Nectarius, the bishop of that city, that he first learned at Milan the difference between a bishop and a prince; adding, that he had at last discovered one who would venture to tell him the truth; and that in Ambrose he had found a person who, above all others, truly deserved the name of a bishop.

26. Shortly after his return to the capital, the repose of the Emperor was again disturbed by news from the West, which informed him of a fatal conspiracy which had been planned and executed against Valentinian the Second, the

young sovereign of that part of the empire (A.D. 392). This prince, who had now arrived at his twentieth year, was already distinguished by a firm attachment to the cause of Christianity, and by his virtuous conduct. The instruction received from Ambrose had entirely effaced whatever of an injurious nature he had imbibed from his mother Justina, who had patronized the Arian faith. Justina did not long survive the marriage of her daughter Galla with the Eastern Emperor; but the affection of her son was shewn, in the tender regard which he manifested for his two sisters. His chastity, temperance, and contempt of pleasure, were proofs of an exalted character in this age of luxury. His conduct was applauded by his subjects, and was much admired by Theodosius himself, who placed under his absolute dominion, all the provinces from which he had been driven by Maximus. To this generous gift was added all those countries beyond the Alps, which had been wrested from his brother Gratian by that usurper. Scarcely, however, had Valentinian arrived at the age of manhood, when he became a victim to the domestic treason of his principal officer, Arbogastes. The soldiers were corrupted by this master-general of the armies of Gaul; and having been deprived too hastily of his command, in consequence of the suspicions of the Emperor, the latter was found, a few days after this quarrel, strangled in his apartment.

27. It was in vain that Arbogastes attempted to disguise his guilt, by setting up Eugenius, the rhetorician, his own creature, in the room of the murdered Emperor. Theodosius was resolved at once to avenge his brother-in-law, and to soothe the grief of his beloved wife by taking arms against the usurper. But shortly after this event, he was doomed to bewail her decease. Galla died in child-birth, leaving behind her, however, a daughter named Placidia, whose history was destined hereafter to be far more conspicuous in the annals of the empire, than that of either of his two sons, Arcadius and Honorius, the offspring of his first wife, Flacilla.

28. This domestic trial, and the extensive preparations required to meet a powerful enemy, who had obtained the unanimous suffrage of the armies, and of the provinces of the West, consumed a space of two years. The Emperor's piety, his aversion to a civil war, or perhaps his increasing

infirmities of body, induced him now to proceed with more caution and delay, than might have seemed consistent with the character of one, who had led his armies so vigorously and successfully to battle. He seems also to have been impressed with a notion that he ought to obtain some certain intimation of the divine will, which might fortify and animate the minds of his followers. For this purpose, Eutropius, the favourite eunuch of the palace, was sent on an embassy, to one who was now regarded with much the same veneration, as was formerly paid to the oracles of Delphi or Dodona. The personage supposed to possess the requisite knowledge of the secrets of futurity, was an Egyptian monk, termed the Holy John, who dwelt in the remote province of Thebais, on the summit of a lofty mountain. This man had long led the life of a hermit and rigid ascetic, spending all his days, as many did in that age, in the deserts, in prayer and meditation; but on certain days of the week, he gave audience to the anxious inquirers who crowded around the window of his cell. The messengers of Theodosius were assured by this prophet, that the event of a civil war would be a successful one, and that a certain but bloody victory would crown the efforts of the Emperor. Upon receiving this intelligence, the Roman legions were quickly marshalled, by the exertions of his two principal generals, Stilicho and Timasius. Their numbers also were swelled by a large body of Iberian, Arab, and Gothic soldiers. Among the latter was the renowned Alaric, who on this occasion acquired that knowledge in the art of war, which he afterwards employed so fatally in the destruction of Rome.

29. At the foot of the Julian Alps, the forces of the Emperor were drawn up for battle, after occupying the provinces of Pannonia. Here, a conflict of the fiercest nature took place, between the rival armies. The Emperor of the East had advanced with too much precipitation, to storm the encampments of the enemy; and the post of danger being assigned to the Gothic auxiliaries, a great slaughter of these barbarian warriors was the result. Bacurius, general of the Iberians, and ten thousand of his troops, perished bravely in the field. A temporary retreat was thus rendered necessary for the exhausted army of Theodosius, at the close of the day. His anxiety became great; but before the morrow arrived, his legions were reinforced by a large body

of deserters from the ranks of his foes, who either feared the success of their cause, or distrusted the title of their new sovereign. When the hostile armies again encountered each other on the following morning, the elements also enlisted themselves on the side of Theodosius. A violent wind from the Alps blew clouds of dust in the face of his antagonists, and turned aside or repelled their javelins with a force, that seemed almost supernatural to the Gauls. This advantage being skilfully improved, the victory was soon decided against them, and they yielded to the fortune of a conqueror, who seemed irresistible. Eugenius, who had fully believed himself master of the empire, was reduced to the necessity of imploring the Emperor's mercy; but whilst he lay prostrate at the feet of Theodosius, the soldiers struck off his head. Arbogastes escaped to the mountains, where he wandered about several days, but at length, in despair, fell upon his own sword (A.D. 394).

30. In a corner of Italy the fate of the empire was thus quickly determined. It was rescued from the miseries of a civil war, and all the provinces of the East and West were happily again united under one family and one head. The bishop of Milan, who had prudently withdrawn himself from the city, to avoid giving any sanction to the usurper by his presence, now again returned to welcome and congratulate an Emperor upon whose clemency he could rely on behalf of the vanquished. His warm intercession, in favour of those who had been concerned in the rebellion, was successful; and the exertions of Ambrose, and his past faithfulness, increased the esteem with which he was alike justly regarded by the sovereign, the church, and a grateful people.

31. Theodosius also, by the great victory obtained at this time, and by his conduct after it, secured more strongly the attachment of his subjects, and the long continuance of his reign was an event which all seemed earnestly to desire, for the safety and welfare of the empire. As the age which he had reached did not yet exceed fifty years, a long prospect of future happiness was yet open under the sway of such a monarch. But this was not the will of that Providence, whose ways are unsearchable. Only a few months after his triumph, while he was still at Milan, his bodily infirmities began rapidly to increase, and the alarming

symptoms of a dropsy made it but too visible, that the valuable life of the great Emperor was drawing to a close. His younger son, Honorius, was therefore sent for, and received from his father the sceptre of the West. To do honour to the arrival of the young prince, the games of the Circus were exhibited on a scale of more than usual magnificence. Theodosius, by his attendance for a short time, laboured to dispel the public gloom. But his increasing weakness compelled him hastily to withdraw to his private chamber, leaving his son to supply the place of one whose end was much nearer than any who had lately seen him could have anticipated. His strength had been too much exhausted by the efforts of mind and body which he had made, to receive the heir of his dominions in a suitable manner, and the monarch of the Roman world closed his eyes upon all earthly glories during the succeeding night (Jan. 17, A.D. 395).

32. The death of the great Theodosius, when he had only just passed the meridian of life, was a subject of universal lamentation; and none of his subjects regretted his loss more than Ambrose. The Emperor had frequently conversed with him during his last sickness, expressing, in the strongest manner, his desires for the welfare of the Christian religion, and showing his attention to its precepts. His sincerity in this respect was manifested, by issuing an edict to release the people from all the taxes that were left unpaid, and to declare that all who had taken part with Eugenius should be fully pardoned.

33. The solemnities of his funeral were kept at Milan, on the fortieth day after his decease, but his corpse was afterwards carried to Constantinople, and buried in the sepulchre of Constantine. Ambrose pronounced a long funeral oration in his praise, which he well deserved from the bishop, having been, in all respects, "a nursing father" to the church, and a champion in its cause, who had given the death-blow to Paganism. But the venerable Father did not long survive this melancholy event. He died only about two years after the Emperor (A.D. 397), leaving behind him the highest reputation for his saintly virtues, and fulfilling that testimony to his worth, which had been given almost prophetically by Stilicho, a short period before his

death—"Whenever that great man dies," said the general, "destruction hangs over Italy."

34. Neither of the two sons of Theodosius had yet reached the age of manhood, Arcadius being only in his eighteenth year, and Honorius, a mere child, at the age of eleven. The empire, therefore, had everything to fear from its foreign and domestic enemies. The Christian religion had now lost a sincere and zealous protector, and the state a sovereign, whose name was "a tower of strength," as a hero and a conqueror. He was the last of the Roman emperors who sustained the glory that justly crowns the reputation of a Cæsar, an Augustus, or a Constantine. With the exception of only one action in his life, which was perhaps more the act of Rufinus, his minister, than his own (the slaughter at Thessalonica), there is no crime for which his memory stands chargeable. He was an eminent example of the power of Christianity over the conscience, even with regard to the sequel of that transaction; and this in an age when it was only beginning to assert its full authority over the minds of the mighty and the noble. Even the pagan historians have not been able to withhold from him the due measure of praise for the many virtues which he possessed. We learn from one of them, that though naturally choleric, he was of a mild and gracious disposition;—that his bounties were unlimited to the deserving;—that he discouraged drunkenness, and drove licentiousness from his court by every means in his power;—that he was temperate in his diet, moderate in his recreations, pleasant and affable in his discourse;—and that he had none of that haughtiness which was usually found under the imperial garb. One thing the reader must also have observed in his history, and should be noticed to his especial honour:—the wars in which he engaged were never wars of ambition, or of his own seeking, but were entirely thrust upon him, and rendered necessary for the safety or defence of the empire. With the highest courage and talents, he united that love of peace, which is seldom found in union with these qualities. As a great conqueror and sovereign, we may sum up his history with this observation of a master historian, "*The genius of Rome expired with Theodosius.*"

A brief history of the family of this Emperor, in connection with the fortunes of the Roman state, will form an appropriate conclusion to this chapter.

35. Arcadius and Honorius, to whom Theodosius had bequeathed the gift of a mighty empire, inherited but little of the virtues of their great parent. Arcadius, who reigned over the East, had a mind which was soon placed entirely under the sway of others. Rufinus, his minister, for a time usurped over his person and dominions an absolute control; and the eastern provinces suffered grievously through the influence of a tyrant, who aimed at the accumulation of wealth by extortion and injustice of every kind. But the speedy fall of this minister, and his assassination by the soldiers of Stilicho, under the orders of their general Gainas, placed the administration in the hands of the chamberlain of the palace, Eutropius, who had won the Emperor's unbounded confidence, by his defeating the scheme of Rufinus to marry him to his own daughter; and by procuring for him a bride, more agreeable to his choice, in the person of Eudoxia, daughter of Bruto, a general of the Franks. By the arts of this crafty eunuch, who imitated the vices of Rufinus, and by the influence of his beautiful but imperious wife, Arcadius became a sovereign only in name. His greatness was only conspicuous to his people in the extreme splendour of his dress and equipage. In this respect he rivalled even the monarchs of Persia. "The Emperor," says a writer* who lived at the period, and whose works contain a number of curious descriptions of the manners and customs of that age, "wears on his head either a diadem, or a crown of gold, decorated with precious stones of inestimable value. These ornaments and his purple garments are reserved for his sacred person alone, and his robes of silk are embroidered with the figures of golden dragons. His throne is of massy gold. Wherever he appears in public he is surrounded by his courtiers, his guards, and their attendants. Their spears, their shields, their cuirasses, the bridles and trappings of their horses, have either the substance or the appearance of gold; and the large splendid boss, in the midst of their shield, is encircled with smaller bosses, which represent the shape of the human eye. The two mules that draw the chariot of

* Chrysostom.

the monarch, are perfectly white, and shining all over with gold. The chariot itself, of pure and solid gold, attracts the admiration of the spectators, who contemplate the purple curtains, the snowy carpet, the size of the precious stones, and the resplendent plates of gold, that glitter as they are agitated by the motion of the carriage. The imperial pictures are white, on a blue ground; the Emperor appears (in these), seated on his throne, with his arms, his horses, and his guards beside him, and his vanquished enemies in chains at his feet."

36. A year scarcely elapsed after the death of Theodosius, before this supine and luxurious Emperor received an alarm from the Gothic tribes. They were again in arms, led on by Alaric. Through the weakness or treachery of the ministers of Arcadius, a treaty was concluded with this renowned chief: and a part of Illyricum was conceded to him, as the price of the safety of the eastern provinces of Rome (A.D. 398). Another, and equally formidable barbarian, appeared on the field in the following year, to dispute the prize of empire. Gainas, who has been already mentioned, a general of the Ostrogoths, united his rebellious forces with those of Trebigild, a general of the same nation in Phrygia, and placed the throne in danger. But this revolt was appeased by the sacrifice of Eutropius, who had provoked the enmity of these barbarians, and of Aurelian and Saturninus, two men of consular rank (A.D. 399). After having obtained these concessions, Gainas became a victim to the resentment of his own countrymen. Favritta, a brave and loyal confederate of the empire, encountered the rebel in the warfare which was transferred to Thrace, and being assisted by Huldin, king of the Huns, Gainas was slain in battle, and his head was sent, as a most acceptable present, to the court of Constantinople (A.D. 401).

37. The remainder of this reign was distinguished by no event more memorable than the persecution of John Chrysostom, who was at this time bishop of the imperial city. Incurring the resentment of Eudoxia, for the bold and fearless manner in which from the pulpit he had rebuked the vices of the court and city, and opposed in his zealous efforts to reform his clergy, by a corrupt party among them, at the head of whom Theophilus, then bishop of Alexandria, placed himself, this admirable preacher and divine was

driven as an exile into the deserts of Mount Taurus. Here he underwent the severest trials and privations, being hurried from one place to another, by the malice of his persecutors for nearly three years; and at length finishing his sufferings at Cumana in Pontus (A.D. 407), in the sixtieth year of his age. Thirty years after his death, so high was the veneration then paid to his memory, that his relics were transported to the royal city. The Emperor Theodosius advanced to meet them as far as Chalcedon; and, falling prostrate on the coffin, implored, in the name of his guilty parents, the forgiveness of the much-injured saint.

38. But Arcadius and Eudoxia did not many months survive the injury which they had done to him in his lifetime, by their folly and cruelty to one, who was the last great representative of the eloquence of ancient Greece. They both died in the following year (A.D. 408); the former at the age of thirty-one, after a reign of little more than thirteen years, during which scarcely one action is to be mentioned, which can be said to belong entirely to the feeble son of Theodosius. The Empire of the East had been grievously afflicted within this short period. Incursions of the Goths—inroads of the Isaurian robbers—earthquakes—flights of locusts—famine—and other events, were among the disasters attributed by the popular discontent to the visible incapacity of this degenerate son of a great Emperor.

39. The reign of Honorius was distinguished by even worse calamities to the Western Empire of Rome. Alaric, when he had received the master-generalship of Illyricum, and been solemnly proclaimed king of the Visigoths, turned his destructive forces towards Italy. There he was first met by the illustrious Stilicho, whose martial exploits have given him, in the epic poem of Claudius, a celebrity almost like that enjoyed by Æneas, in the work of Virgil. By the power of his arms, the empire was for a while nobly defended. At the battle of Pollentia, Alaric was defeated and put to flight (A.D. 403). Another swarm of barbarians, led on by Radagaisus, consisting of Vandals, Suevi, and Burgundians, about two years afterwards, were also routed and destroyed near Florence, by the same great general (A.D. 406), who thus won for himself the glorious title of the Deliverer of Italy. In the following year, however, Gaul was desolated

by the barbarians who had retreated thither, and effected a permanent settlement in that country. In the same year the British provinces revolted from the dominion of Rome, acknowledging for a short time the authority of a soldier sprung from the private ranks of the army, whose name was Constantine, but who afterwards made himself master of Gaul and took possession of the province of Spain. From this time (A.D. 409) Britain and Armorica acquired their independence. They could no longer rely upon the aid of a declining monarchy; and they presently expelled the Roman magistrates, who acted on the authority of the usurper. Honorius himself committed the care of Britain to its own people; and from that time the Romans never made an attempt to regain their lost dominion over this island (A.D 412). A few years afterwards they began to be governed by their native princes (A.D. 426); and at a somewhat later period, having subdued their troublesome neighbours, the Scots and Picts, they had learned to become a nation of warriors, and could raise a body of twelve thousand independent men, to assist Anthemius (A.D. 467–472), in his warfare with the Gauls.

40. About the time when Britain was thus enabled to shake off its foreign yoke, a negociation took place between the great captain Stilicho, and Alaric, his former antagonist. An aversion to the continuance of a civil war, and his knowledge of the weakness of the Roman state, induced Stilicho to propose to the Senate the condition of peace or war; and the latter could only be averted by a heavy bribe. Four thousand pounds of gold were therefore granted under the name of a subsidy to Alaric, as the price of his friendship with Italy (A.D. 407). This event proved the downfall of the hero who had been its deliverer. His enemies, under a charge of treason against his country, successfully conspired for his destruction. He was obliged to take sanctuary in a church. Even the marriage of his daughter Maria with Honorius could not shield him in the hour of danger. He was lured from his place of retreat by a faithless promise of safety; and, though no serious charge could be alleged against him, yet this last of the Roman generals was put to death as a traitor and a parricide (A.D. 408).

41. After the death of the great hero Stilicho, Alaric again speedily appeared in arms, demanding the subsidy,

which had not yet been paid him. This being still delayed, he marched forth to pillage several of the cities of Italy, and was not long before he encamped with a large army under the walls of Rome. The rapacious demands of the barbarian could now only be satisfied by the immediate payment of five thousand pounds of gold, thirty thousand pounds of silver, four thousand robes of silk, three thousand pieces of fine scarlet, and three thousand weight of pepper. A compliance with such extravagant proposals served only to stimulate the desires of the Gothic general for larger acquisitions. He next began to stipulate, as the condition of permanent peace, an annual subsidy of corn and money, and the provinces of Dalmatia, Noricum, and Venetia, for the seat of his new kingdom. But this preposterous demand the ministers of Honorius seemed determined to resist, and Alaric again, the second time, laid siege to the capital (A.D. 409).

42. For a short interval the designs of the Gothic invader were suspended, by the Romans consenting to place Attalus, who received his support, upon the throne of Honorius. The latter, although shut up in the impenetrable fortress of Ravenna, awaited the event with great trepidation. But the same hand which, for his own purposes, had exalted a rival in the empire, speedily debased him, and Attalus was again despoiled of his diadem. Honorius might now have purchased the temporary safety of Rome, by a treaty of peace, had he not provoked the Goth, by receiving into his palace, Sarus, an hereditary enemy of Alaric, and who surprised and slaughtered a large body of the forces of the latter. He therefore now again advanced to seize with more avidity the prey which he had relinquished. In spite of the determination of the Senate to make a desperate resistance, and to defend the city to the utmost extremity, it was at last betrayed into the hands of its foes by a secret conspiracy of the slaves and domestics. At the hour of midnight the Salernian gate was silently opened, and the tremendous blast of the Gothic trumpet announced the entrance of a barbarian host within those walls which had defended Rome for a period of eleven hundred and sixty-three years.

43. The imperial capital of the Cæsars was thus delivered over to its enemies (A.D. 410, August 29). For three days

it was given up to the licentious fury of the barbarian tribes of Germany and Scythia, aided by the private revenge of forty thousand slaves, who exercised their lawless passions almost without control.

One remarkable scene, however, presented itself amidst this theatre of outrage. The churches of St. Peter and St. Paul, and the sacred vessels belonging to the former, were religiously preserved; and these buildings were converted into an inviolable sanctuary, by express orders from the conqueror. This singular exception formed so striking a contrast to the havoc and carnage which overspread the rest of the city and its inhabitants, that it might well seem to many to be an instance of providential interference. Augustine, the bishop of Hippo, in Africa, thus regarded it as a miraculous event, and took advantage of the occasion to compose a celebrated treatise, entitled the "City of God," in which he successfully exposes the folly of Paganism and the excellence of Christianity. This learned father of the Latin church, in this admirable dissertation, challenges the pagans to produce any similar instance in history, of a city taken by storm, in which the fabulous gods of antiquity had been thus able to protect either themselves, their shrines, or any of their deluded votaries.

44. After the forces of Alaric had thus ravaged Rome, they easily took possession of the rest of Italy. About four years elapsed, during which they held undisturbed possession of the whole country; subjecting their trembling captives, and even the sons and daughters of patrician families, to every menial service. But their chief survived his victory a much shorter time, dying, almost suddenly, near Consentia, while meditating a descent upon the opposite shores of Africa (A.D. 410). The circumstances attending the interment of this fierce hero were almost as singular as those of his life. The small river Busentinus was for a while diverted from its course; and in the bed of it his sepulchre was made by the labour of a captive multitude. After his burial, the waters were restored to their former channel; and that the precise spot where he was interred might remain for ever unknown, the prisoners who executed the work were all massacred.

45. The new king of the Goths was Adolphus, who entered into a pacific treaty with the Roman state (A.D. 412); and

two years after, was married to Placidia, the half-sister of Honorius, and the daughter of Theodosius by his second wife Galla. Placidia had fallen into the hands of Adolphus, either as a hostage or a captive; and though an alliance of this kind with the Gothic king, was exceedingly distasteful to Honorius and his ministers, who had repeatedly urged her restitution, yet it was not without her own consent that she gave her hand to a conqueror, possessing the qualities of youth and valour, with grace and beauty of person. The marriage of Placidia was celebrated with the utmost degree of splendour. She was arrayed as an Empress, and placed on a throne of royal state; and at the nuptial feast, a hundred basins of gold and gems were presented to her, by fifty beautiful youths, clothed in silken robes, who carried a basin in each hand.

46. Adolphus, after this event of his marriage, proceeded to vanquish and destroy two usurpers, Jovinus and Sebastian, who had set up their standards in Gaul (A.D. 412). He afterwards turned his victorious arms against the barbarians of Spain. But here he became a victim to domestic treason, being treacherously murdered in the palace of Barcelona. His widow fell into the power of his successor in the command of the troops; and was compelled to march on foot for twelve miles with a crowd of common captives before the horse of the barbarian, who had murdered a husband whom she sincerely loved and lamented.

47. The adventures of this extraordinary woman might furnish almost the subject of a romance. Singeric, the murderer of Adolphus, was only suffered to enjoy his power and his life for about seven days. Wallia, who took possession of his place, was constrained by the fear of an approaching army, to listen to terms which engaged him to draw his sword in the service of the Roman Empire. One condition of this treaty was, that Placidia should be restored to her brother; and, as the price of her ransom, six hundred thousand measures of wheat were delivered to the hungry Goths. No sooner did she return to Italy again, than a new trial awaited her. She was compelled, by sacrificing her own wishes for the public good, to wed a new husband in the person of Constantius, a brave and faithful general of Honorius, who had subdued the usurper Constantine (A.D. 411), and done him other signal services. Not long after this marriage, the

servant of Honorius was honourably associated with him in the empire, and received the title of Augustus; but he died in the seventh month of his dignity, or about two years after he had become the husband of Placidia.

48. Over the mind of the generous soldier, the sway of the wife had been absolute; and after his death it was exercised with the same power over her brother Honorius. But a quarrel, fomented by some of the servants of the palace, led to angry debates. And as the Gothic soldiers espoused the cause of one, whom they still regarded as their queen, the city of Ravenna became a scene of dangerous tumults, which could only be appeased by her withdrawal. She therefore repaired to the court of Constantinople, taking with her in her exile her two infant children, a son and daughter, the offspring of Constantius. Here she was entertained with much kindness and magnificence by her royal relatives. These consisted of Theodosius, the son of Arcadius, known by the title of Theodosius the Second; his wife Eudocia, a beautiful and accomplished woman of Athens, and daughter of the philosopher Leontius, whom he had married about two years previously (A.D. 421); and Pulcheria, the Emperor's sister. Within a few months after the arrival of Placidia, another revolution took place in her fortunes and those of her family. Honorius died of a dropsy after a disgraceful reign of twenty-eight years (A.D. 423 Aug. 27). One event may, however, be mentioned to his honour. He abolished the games of the gladiators in the amphitheatre (A.D. 404). The death of Telemachus, an intrepid Asiatic monk, who lost his life in an attempt to separate two of these bloody combatants, led to the enactment of a law that for ever put a stop to this cruel practice, which had long disgraced the Roman name, and in which several hundred victims were annually slaughtered in the great cities of the empire.

49. The throne of the West was now usurped for a short interval by John, the Primicerius or Secretary of the late Emperor. An expedition was therefore fitted out under the conduct of Ardaburius and his son Aspar, two distinguished generals, for the purpose of effecting the conquest of Italy. The latter with a body of cavalry conducted Placidia and her son along the sea-coast of the Hadriatic. After some delays and difficulties, their enterprise was entirely suc-

cessful. John was betrayed by a conspiracy of soldiers, and led forth from the fortress of Ravenna, mounted upon an ass to be executed in the circus of Aquileia. The cause of Placidia and her son was warmly espoused by Theodosius, who, though he might now have reigned sole Emperor of the Romans, was satisfied with acquiring, under a title of compensation for the expenses of the war, the province of the Western Illyricum, the maritime and rich province of Dalmatia, and the dangerous sovereignty of Pannonia and Noricum, which had been filled and ravaged for about twenty years by Huns, Ostrogoths, Vandals, and Bavarians. These and some other arrangements being made, the Emperor resigned the Western division of the empire to his royal cousin, whose claims were thus readily acknowledged by the Senate, and he was invested with the name and dignity of Augustus, under the title of Valentinian the Third (A.D. 425).

50. The new Emperor was at this time only in his sixth year; and his minority threw into the hands of his mother Placidia, for a considerable period, the government of one-half of the Roman world. In the East, also, the dominion was virtually placed in the hands of a woman; for Pulcheria, the sister of the reigning Emperor, was the only one of the descendants of Theodosius besides Placidia, who possessed any share of his manly spirit and abilities. Although only two years older than her brother, she had received the title of Augusta, and amply vindicated it, by the nature of her influence, during his lifetime. After a troubled, and for the most part inglorious, reign of forty-three years, which he terminated by a fall from his horse as he was riding or hunting in the neighbourhood of Constantinople (A.D. 450), Pulcheria became the Empress of the East. For the first time the Romans submitted to a female sovereign; but she ended her life and short reign (A.D. 453), leaving behind her an immense patrimony for pious uses, and an illustrious reputation as a queen, a saint, and a virgin. After the death of her brother, she married Marcian, a virtuous senator, aged sixty years, to give weight to her administration. But he was only a nominal husband; and upon his death (A.D. 457), Leo, an obscure military tribune of Thrace, was exalted to the throne of the East. From about the middle of the fifth

century, therefore, the direct line of the Theodosian family may be said to have been terminated, in this part of the Roman Empire, by the death of Pulcheria.

51. In the West, however, the successors of Theodosius had become extinct a few years before this time, by the death of Placidia (A.D. 450), and her son, Valentinian (A.D. 455). He had been betrothed to his cousin Eudoxia, daughter of Theodosius the Second, even while he was a child, and an exile at the Eastern court; but the marriage, which was one agreed to by the parents on both sides at that time, did not take place till thirteen years later (or A.D. 436). By this union Valentinian had no son, but his daughters and their descendants, partaking of the strange vicissitudes which attended the fall of his empire, intermarried with some of its rulers both in the East and West; and thus through the female line this illustrious race was yet continued for several generations. A niece of Justinian's, an Emperor who succeeded to the Eastern throne about ninety years afterwards (A.D. 527), is believed to have been the eighth descendant of Theodosius the Great.

52. The character of Valentinian, the last of the direct male line of his celebrated grandfather, was one but ill-suited to sustain the greatness of an empire, now assaulted in Gaul, in Italy, in Africa, and in Spain, by various tribes of the Gothic invaders. For awhile his valiant general, Ætius, arrested their progress; and, aided by the counsels of Placidia, he was enabled with some difficulty still to support a tottering throne. But having in a fit of jealousy stabbed this general with his own hand (A.D. 454), and acted the part of a Tarquin towards the wife of Petronius Maximus, a worthy Roman senator of the Anician family, Valentinian soon closed his career of follies and of crimes. He fell a victim to the revenge of those whom he had injured, and their confederates, and was assassinated at a military spectacle in the field of Mars (A.D. 455, March 16).

53. With the fall of the last Emperor of the family of Theodosius, the dominion of Rome (properly speaking) may be said to have ceased. When Romulus first laid the foundations of the great city (B.C. 753), twelve vultures were seen together;—an omen which, in the opinion of the augurs, was prophetic of its duration for twelve centuries. And this age it had now just reached; and the signs of its

speedy downfall were but too apparent. With his Huns, Attila had already ravaged a part of Italy, taken some of its principal cities, and reduced many of them to heaps of stone and ashes (A.D. 452). The Visigoths had erected a kingdom in the southern part of Gaul (A.D. 451) under Theodoric; and the Franks had commenced their dynasty of kings in the line of Merowing (A.D. 448). In the same year also that Valentinian fell, the Vandals under Genseric, sacked and pillaged Rome (A.D. 455, June 15–29). The widow of the last Emperor, Eudoxia, and her two daughters were among the captives, the only surviving remains of the great Theodosius; and were constrained to follow the haughty conqueror towards the port of Carthage. Of their subsequent history, little more is told us than that two of those royal captives were afterwards restored by Genseric, to one of his allies who yet bore the title of Emperor of the West —Olybrius, a senator of the Anician family; that to him Placidia, the younger daughter of Valentinian, was married; and that the remaining child of Eudoxia was still retained as the wife, or rather the captive, of the son of the Vandal conqueror.

54. Within twenty years after the death of Valentinian the Third, nine Emperors severally claimed a brief, precarious, and undefined sovereignty over the ancient empire of Rome. In the year 476, the seat of empire was filled for a short time by the son of Orestes, a native of Pannonia—who, having married the daughter of Count Romulus, added to this title the familiar surname of Augustus. But the influence of Orestes, who first served under Attila, then under Valentinian, and was now raised to the rank of master-general of the troops, was the only recommendation that his son possessed to the empire, besides that of a beautiful person. The sceptre, therefore, was speedily snatched from hands that were unable to defend it, by a bold adventurer named Odoacer, chief of the Scyrri, or Heruli, who raised his standard against Orestes, and secured his execution. The feeble Augustus was dethroned, and constrained to sue for mercy. Odoacer, however, showed his clemency by sparing the fallen sovereign; but he dismissed him from the palace, assigning him the castle of Lucullus in Campania, as his future residence; and granting him an annual allow-

ance of six thousand pieces of gold. The name of the degraded youth was changed by the Greeks into Momyllus, and by the Latins into Augustulus, to express thier derision of a title, which had thus degenerated into a mere shadow and mockery of its original greatness.

55. The throne of Romulus and Augustus was now become the seat of a Gothic barbarian, and an epistle was addressed by the unanimous decree of the Roman Senate, to the Emperor Zeno, the son-in-law and successor of Leo, in the East, solemnly disclaiming the necessity, or even the wish of continuing any longer the imperial succession in Italy; since, in their opinion, the majesty of a sole monarch is sufficient to pervade and protect at the same time both the East and West. Confiding in the civil and military virtues of Odoacer, they humbly requested that the Emperor would invest him with the title of Patrician and with the administration of the diocese of Italy. The vanity of Zeno was gratified by the title of sole Emperor, and statues were erected to his honour in the several quarters of Rome. He gratefully accepted the ensigns of the throne and palace, which the barbarian was not unwilling to remove from the sight of the people, and Odoacer thus legally took possession of the kingdom of Italy, and maintained himself in it for about fourteen years, till he was put down by the superior genius of Theodoric, King of the Ostrogoths. During this period, one-third of those large estates, into which the kingdom of Italy had been divided, and which is supposed to have been one of the principal causes of its ruin, were bestowed upon the conquerors; but so great was the desolation which had been produced by the wars that led to this event, that in Æmilia, in Tuscany, and in the adjacent provinces, the human species are said to have been nearly exterminated. That empire which had been for so many centuries a great and united one, became a total wreck, and could henceforth be discerned only in those small, separate, and scattered sovereignties, erected by the Gothic princes upon its ruins. From this epoch, therefore (A.D. 476–490), the history of a people who had subdued the world, is that of the Gothic nations who became blended with them, and gradually adopted their laws and customs, giving them their own peculiar stamp and signature. Whatever yet remained of the power

or conquests of ancient Rome, could only be seen in the East, where the relics of a wide dominion still continued for nearly a thousand years longer; constituting, however, no longer a period of Roman history, or of Roman greatness, but that of the Greek Empire.

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ERA THE EIGHTH.

THE LIFE OF POPE GREGORY THE GREAT.

THE PONTIFICATE OF GREGORY THE FIRST—THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY AMONG THE SAXONS IN BRITAIN.

1. About the close of the sixth century, the fate of Rome had reached its lowest point of depression. After the removal of the seat of the empire to Constantinople, and the invasion of the West, first by the Goths, and afterwards by the establishment of the powerful race of the Lombards throughout Italy, Rome was despoiled of its greatness and glory. It was like a lofty tree, that had been deprived of its leaves and branches, and whose sapless trunk was left to wither in the ground. The individual who restored it in some measure to its former vigour, and became the founder of a new race of spiritual, as well as temporal sovereigns, was a bishop of the church, whose history, therefore, constitutes one of the most remarkable periods; interesting, on many accounts, alike to the politician and the Christian.

2. Gregory the First (for there were many popes who afterwards assumed the same name) was born about the year 544, and was descended from an illustrious stock. His grandfather Felix had himself borne the office of bishop of Rome. His parents were Sylvia and Gordian, nobles of the Senate, and pious members of the church. Among his female relations he could number saints and virgins; and in a family portrait which he presented to the church of St. Andrew, his own figure with that of his father and mother, adorned the walls of the building for three hundred years afterwards. His piety was remarkable at an early period of his life; and his ample patrimony was devoted to works

of religion. He founded seven monasteries, one in Rome and six in Sicily. But although he assumed the monastic habit and profession from choice, it was not because he was unsuited to the business of active life; for his birth and abilities had raised him to the office of prefect of the city. After he became a deacon of the church, he was sent to the Byzantine court as nuncio, or minister of the see of Rome; and he there performed his part with a boldness and dignity which had been unusual, and drew much attention to his conduct.

3. On his return to Rome, he was unanimously chosen to the office of Bishop of that city, on the decease of Pelagius (A.D. 590). But with that humility which always formed a striking feature of his character, he refused to accept this office, and sent a petition to the Emperor Maurice, beseeching him to reject this choice of the Romans. The letter, however, was intercepted, and the election was confirmed. To evade the honour which was thrust upon him, he obtained the aid of some friendly merchants, who conveyed him in a wicker basket beyond the walls of Rome. He remained in concealment for three days, among the woods and mountains. At length his retreat was discovered, and he was compelled to enter upon the duties of his bishopric.

4. The plague at this time prevailed in Rome, and Gregory, however backward to become a bishop, forgot not the duties of his sacred office, when he had entered upon it. He preached with much energy and affection, exhorting all classes to repentance. He also appointed a solemn litany or supplication, to be performed throughout the city. Seven companies were directed to march in procession at break of day, from different churches, and then to meet in one place. The first company consisted of the clergy; the second of abbots with their monks; the third of abbesses with their nuns; the fourth of children; the fifth of laymen; the sixth of widows; the seventh of married women. Fourscore persons died in one hour, while the people were thus engaged, but the labours of the bishop continued without intermission; and to alleviate this calamity he persisted in the work of prayer and preaching till the plague ceased.

5. Even at this time the revenues of the Bishop of Rome

were exceedingly large. The church over which he presided had ample possessions in Italy, Sicily, and the more distant provinces. Gregory provided for the distribution of this patrimony with the utmost care. In the use of all this wealth, he acted like a faithful steward of the church and of the poor. Those who farmed the estates, of which he had the management, were treated with all the consideration due from a vigilant and moderate landlord; and he enforced the necessity upon his officers of not suffering the church to be defiled by base or unjust gains. He ordered an exact account to be kept of all the sums received and expended, which was preserved for three hundred years afterwards in the Lateran, and esteemed a model of Christian economy. On the four great festivals of the church, he distributed their quarterly allowance to the clergy, to his domestics, to the monasteries, the churches, the places of burial, the almshouses, the hospitals of Rome, and the rest of the diocese. On the first day of every month, he distributed to the poor, according to the season, a stated portion of corn, wine, cheese, vegetables, oil, fish, fresh provisions, clothes, and money. His treasures were continually ready to satisfy the demands of indigence and merit. The distress of the sick and helpless, of strangers and pilgrims, was relieved by the bounty of each day and of every hour. Before he sat down to eat, he sent portions from his table to indigent people who were ashamed to appear. The misery of the times had reduced the nobles and matrons of Rome to accept the benevolence of the church; three thousand virgins received their food and raiment from the hand of this benefactor, and many bishops of Italy having fled from the barbarians, took shelter within his hospitable threshold.

6. Nothing delighted this good bishop more than to exercise his charitable disposition in such works of mercy. He pressed his agents to inform him of objects upon whom he might bestow his kindness, and loved to exceed the expectations of his petitioners. But while he abounded in benefactions, he would receive none himself. "We ought to refuse," said he, writing to Felix, bishop of Messina, "presents which are expensive to the churches. Send to the other clergymen every year what is established by usage. But as I love not presents, I forbid you to send me any for the future. I thank you for the palm-trees which you sent

me, but I have caused them to be sold, and have sent you the price of them."

7. Another anecdote is related by the early historians of the church, which so strongly illustrates the virtues of Gregory, and the opinions of that period, that we shall present it to the reader nearly in the words of the ancient legend. On a certain day a poor man came to Gregory, making his complaint that he had suffered shipwreck at sea, and lost all his goods, so that he had nothing to support himself and his family. Gregory, moved with compassion, gave him six pieces of gold; which having received he departed, but returned soon after, telling his benefactor that he had paid away all he had received, and entreating further relief; upon which the kind hearted-man then gave him another present of similar amount. A third time he renewed this application on the same day, and was again relieved, without question or gainsaying. But coming a fourth time, Gregory having no more gold left, yet unwilling to send him away empty, remembered that he had a piece of silver plate in his house of good value, and ordered it to be given to the poor man. Shortly after this, being made bishop of Rome, twelve poor men were invited to dine with him on the day of his preferment, according to custom. When the bishop had sat down with the twelve, looking round upon his guests and numbering them, he counted thirteen, upon which he asked his steward, why he had transgressed the custom; but the latter answered, that there were but twelve guests at the table. Gregory affirmed still, that he saw thirteen, but observing on the countenance of one of them a remarkable brightness and a peculiar expression of features, he led him into his study when the meal was over, and seriously demanded of him who he was; to which the guest replied, that he was the same person, whom, as a poor man, he had so bountifully relieved four times in one day, with gold and plate; but that he was in reality an angel, whom God, being well pleased with these alms-deeds, had sent to be in future the guardian and director of his servant." Gregory, the legend goes on to relate, was struck with fear and wonder, but while he was giving thanks to God for this great favour, the angel vanished out of his sight.

8. One of the recorded sayings of this eminent man is in perfect agreement with the moral of so singular a legend.

"I can never," said he, "read these words in Scripture which Abraham spoke to Dives, 'Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things (Luke xvi. 25), without horror and astonishment, lest, having received so large a share of the good things of this world, I should be excluded from having any part or portion in the happiness of the world to come."

9. Gregory might justly be styled, even in a better sense than some of the Roman sovereigns had been, the father of his country. Such was the extreme sensibility of his conscience to the claims of poverty, that for the death of a beggar who had perished in the streets, he interdicted himself for several days from the exercise of his sacerdotal functions. His humility also was conspicuous on the following occasion:—The Emperor Justinian had, by a rescript or royal decree, declared the Roman bishop as *Head of all the churches* (A.D. 533), a grant of which the Romish Church has since availed itself to establish its claim to a universal supremacy. This prerogative, however, was always regarded with much jealousy by the bishop of Constantinople, and at this time one of them disturbed the peace of the church, by boldly assuming it as belonging to the imperial city, rather than to the more ancient seat of the empire. It was in consequence of this, that Gregory the Great in his epistles thought it necessary to rebuke this arrogance though at the expense of his own dignity; and this he might well do, as he had assumed for himself only the title of servant of the servants of Jesus Christ. Without scruple he declared that whosoever called himself a universal bishop was Antichrist, or the forerunner of Antichrist; that the fact of John, the Patriarch of the East, usurping such a title argued that the time of Antichrist was nigh at hand (A.D. 582). The conduct of Gregory in this respect presents a remarkable contrast with that of Boniface, one of his immediate successors. He ambitiously sought and obtained from Phocas, the murderer of the Emperor Maurice, a recognition of the original title (A.D. 606). The bishop of Constantinople was again consigned to the second rank, and this state of things continued till a separation took place between the eastern and western churches (A.D. 1054).

10. One important office of the bishops of Rome at this period was to act as an umpire, and to promote peace

between parties who were in a state of variance, either in spiritual or temporal matters. The situation of the bishop of a city which had the claim of antiquity and of ancient dignity, above every other, naturally placed him at the head of the church, though without any assumption of that infallibility which was afterwards a prerogative supposed to be attached to the office. Gregory was incessantly employed in the work of exercising his mediation, or using his exhortations to promote the general benefit of his country. His letters, which are still preserved, shew the immense amount of time and labour employed in his correspondence. His efforts were in this way directed to promote, as one of the first objects he had at heart, the conversion of the Lombards. This people had now established themselves throughout the whole of Italy, with the exception of that part of it which still belonged to the Exarch of Ravenna, who was the representative of the Eastern Emperor; presenting still the shadow of the imperial authority, in what remained to him of the western provinces. For the welfare of this people, Gregory was especially anxious. He corresponded therefore frequently with Theudelinda, who was then Queen of the Lombards. She was the widow of Authuris, who had been a zealous Arian (A.D. 589). After his death (A.D. 590), she married Aigilulph, a Lombard, whom the nation received as king. Being an earnest professor of the Catholic faith, she brought over her husband, and the whole nation at length, to the same views of religion. Gregory had to congratulate her on this circumstance, and used his influence to establish a treaty of peace between the Lombards and the Roman Exarchate (A.D. 595).

11. Another important event in the life of this eminent bishop was his sending the missionary Augustine to the island of Britain, to labour in the conversion of the Saxons (A.D. 597). For a hundred and fifty years after their arrival in Britain, they were still in a state of heathenism. A Christian church had existed in the British Isles from the first age of the Gospel, and there is some reason to believe, that even St. Paul himself might have preached here. But when the original inhabitants retreated before the Saxon invaders, they carried their religion away with them, for the most part into the fastnesses of Wales and Cornwall, and some of the more distant parts of these islands.

Either from fear or inability, or want of zeal, they took no pains to introduce Christianity into the seven Saxon kingdoms called the Heptarchy; and but for the efforts of a bishop animated with the spirit of Gregory, they must therefore have remained under the influence of that ferocious and idolatrous superstition, which led them to destroy many of the Christian churches and monasteries, and to entertain a contempt for the religion of those whom they had conquered.

12. The mission to Britain was an event on which Gregory had deliberated before his consecration. Walking one day in the forum, he saw some remarkable youths, exposed as captives for sale. He was struck by their appearance. Their fine clear skins, the beauty of their flaxen or golden hair, and their ingenuous countenances, excited a lively interest in their favour. He asked from what country they came, and was informed that they were natives of the island of Britain, where the people were still Pagans. "Alas!" said Gregory, sighing deeply, "that the prince of darkness should possess countenances so luminous, and that so fair a front should carry minds destitute of true religion." When informed that they belonged to the English tribe, or nation called Angli, "Truly," said he, "they are like *angels*, and ought to be made co-heritors with the angels in heaven." Then demanding from what province they were brought, the answer was, "From Deira, now called Northumberland." With the same humour he observed, that this might also be said rightly, for they ought to be delivered "de Dei ira," or from the wrath of God. Their king he was also told was called Alla, to which he replied, still playfully dwelling upon the word, "Alleluia ought to be sung in his dominions." But this apparent trifling was not so in reality. A deep purpose was implanted in the soul of Gregory, which ended in serious endeavours. The conversion of the Anglo-Saxons became a favourite object with him, and he set out from Rome to go as a missionary among them; but he was so much beloved by the Roman citizens, that their outcries compelled Pelagius, the bishop of the city, to send after him. After Gregory's election to that office, he dispatched forty missionaries from one of the monasteries he had founded at Rome, and placed Augustine at their head. Having had but little experience in

this work, they turned back before they reached the end of their journey, and would have given up their design, but for the earnestness with which Gregory again exhorted them in his own powerful manner, not to be discouraged by the dangers or difficulties before them. He recommended them also to Etherius, bishop of Arles, and secured them such assistance in France, as greatly contributed to their receiving a hospitable welcome in Britain.

13. Ethelbert, one of the most wise and powerful of the Saxon princes, had now a queen, the daughter of Charibert, King of Paris. She was already a Christian, and had stipulated for the profession of her religion, as one of the conditions of her marrying a heathen prince. It was thus that the way was opened for the introduction of Christianity, by the exertions of Gregory, and the band of missionaries whom he had commissioned. The message of these ministers of mercy was well received. A habitation was assigned them, at first in the Isle of Thanet, and afterwards in Canterbury. Here they officiated in the church, which had been repaired for the queen Bertha's use, and after a short time Ethelbert became a sincere convert to the faith of Christ. Under his protection and patronage, Augustine and his coadjutors extended their labours into the neighbouring kingdoms with much success; and it being intimated to Gregory that more missionaries were wanting for the work, he sent an additional number. Augustine was consecrated in France, Archbishop of the English nation (A.D. 601), and died about ten years after (A.D. 610). He was made a metropolitan bishop, and was ordered to constitute another bishop at York (A. D. 601), like himself having a number of bishops under his government. Thus Christianity was by degrees introduced and firmly established among the Anglo-Saxons. Idolatry was destroyed, and by the advice of Gregory, the idol temples, instead of being overthrown, were converted into churches, where the true God was worshipped, though not without some leaven of that superstition which characterized the church of Rome even at this period (A.D. 600).

14. An important step in this triumph of the Christian religion over a nation of bigoted idolators, was the conversion of Edwin, King of Deira. This happy event was brought about by the ministry of Paulinus, one of the last missionaries

whom Gregory had sent to the assistance of Augustine, and who was raised to the office of bishop, in the hope that he would become the apostle of the Northumbrians: a hope that was not disappointed. His zealous and judicious efforts to influence the King, who was for some time averse to change his religion, were seconded by the good offices of his queen, Edilburga, who, like Bertha, was a Christian before her marriage, and had also made it a condition that she should still enjoy the exercise of her religion. Edwin, however, was a prince of strong mind, and he did not embrace Christianity without first assembling his chiefs in counsel. On this very memorable occasion one of those present made the following significant speech:—"O King, the present life of man, when considered in relation to that which is to come, may be likened to a sparrow flying through the hall, wherein you and your chiefs and servants are seated at supper, in winter time; the hearth blazing in the centre, and the viands smoking, while without is the storm and rain, or snow. The bird flies through, entering at one door, and passing out at the other; he feels not the weather during the little minute that he is within; but after that minute he returns again to winter, as from winter he came, and is seen no more. Such is the life of man; and of what follows it, or of what has gone before it, we are altogether ignorant; therefore, if this new doctrine should bring anything more certain, it well deserves to be followed." The rest of the assembly signified their assent to a change of faith, and it was then proposed that Paulinus should fully explain to them the nature of the new religion which they were called upon to receive. The sequel of this conference was a resolution on the part of all to forsake their former superstitions, and to embrace a religion "which brought life and immortality to light." The King was baptized on Easter-day (A.D. 627), at a place called Godmunddingaham, a little east of York, now known as Godmundham. Multitudes speedily followed his example, and Paulinus is said to have been employed six and thirty days, from morning till evening, in baptizing those who flocked to him. Edwin's conversion was soon followed, not only throughout his own dominions, but beyond it. Amidst the various revolutions of war, Christianity still continued to prosper and diffuse itself; and all the kingdoms of the Heptarchy in the course of

about sixty years (A.D. 597–656) felt the beneficial influence of that religion which Gregory had first established among them, by the agency of Augustine and his fellow missionaries in Kent.

15. We have dwelt the longer on this event, as it is one in which English readers may be supposed to feel a livelier interest than in many of those remoter matters, which were connected with the life of so eminent a man as Gregory the Great. He has been called by venerable Bede *Our Apostle*, because, by his industry, he converted the English nation from the dominion of idolatry to the faith of Christ. He died, however, long before this work was finished, his pontificate continuing only thirteen years and six months (A.D. 604). Besides his active labours as one who was occupied in the government of the city of Rome, and of all the churches of the West, which were subject to his jurisdiction, he found time for the composition of a variety of religious works, attesting his zeal, piety, and general ability above most of the writers of his day. These consist of homilies, or expositions of nearly all the books of holy Scripture, and have been printed at Rome in six folio volumes (A.D. 1588).

16. Much of the Roman liturgy, which has been used in all the churches of Christendom through succeeding ages, owes its authorship, or its peculiar character, to this saint. The Church of England is indebted to him for her Litany; and almost all the collects in her prayer book, that are used on Sundays and on the principal festivals, are taken from a work called the Sacramentary of Gregory, which had been, however, composed in part by Pope Gelasius and others at an earlier period. He also gave more explicit declarations than his predecessors had done, respecting the distribution of parishes, the calendar of festivals, the order of processions, the service of the priests and deacons, the variety and change of sacerdotal garments. Until the last days of his life, he officiated in the most sacred offices of the public service of the church; and he introduced a mode of musical reading, which has been called after him the Gregorian chant. The more ancient chant of St. Ambrose had been confined to four notes, but Gregory increased it to fifteen. Experience had perhaps shewn the effect of these solemn and significant rites, to soothe the distress, to mitigate the fierceness, and

to dispel the gloomy enthusiasm, of barbarians; and he therefore too readily overlooked some of the dangers to which the church was now exposed, from other and more objectionable observances. This was made apparent by his conduct with regard to the images which now began to be placed in churches. Serenus, bishop of Marseilles, observing some of his people too ready to adore them, brake them in pieces, a zeal which displeased many, who withdrew therefore from his communion. Gregory rebuked him on this account, and expressed his wish, that he should rather conciliate the affections of his people, by allowing them to make use of images as historical memorials that might impress their minds with the great facts of Christianity; in short, that they should be used as books for illiterate people, who were, however, to be cautioned against paying them any adoration.

17. The last year of Gregory's life was rendered remarkable by a tragical event—the death of the Emperor Maurice, respecting which the conduct of the saint has been, though perhaps unjustly, condemned. This Emperor was one whose character was, in some respects, praiseworthy. He had great military virtues, and a strong sense of religion; but avarice was one of the faults of his character. The Chagan, or king of the Avars, a Scythian nation on the banks of the Danube, offered to liberate several thousand captive soldiers who had been taken in a recent war, on condition of receiving a small ransom (A.D. 601). But for their rescue Maurice would not part with his money, and the barbarian, in his rage, massacred all his prisoners. Maurice, though covetous, was not inhuman; he was struck with horror at the news, and besought God that his punishment might be in this life, not in the next. This prayer was answered, in the former part of it at least, and we may hope also in the latter. The soldiers, stung with rage, and excited also by a refusal to supply their own wants, rose in arms against the Emperor, and raised Phocas, a centurion, to the imperial throne. Maurice fled, but was seized and barbarously murdered by order of the usurping tyrant. Five of his sons were slain in his sight, before he himself received the fatal stroke. He bore the spectacle with silent resignation, saying only, as each of his children was butchered, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and true are thy

judgments!" A nurse who took care of his youngest son, placed her own in its room. Maurice, detecting the generous fraud, discovered it to the executioners, thus showing his rigid attachment to truth and justice. This tragic scene was closed by the beheading of the Emperor himself. The bodies of the father and his sons were cast into the sea, and their heads were exposed for some time to the insults or pity of the multitude at Constantinople.

18. Phocas, who now reigned (A.D. 502), a worthy rival of the Caligulas and Domitians of the first age of the empire, consummated his crimes by afterwards putting to death the only surviving son of Maurice, besides the Empress and her three daughters. But retribution followed. Within eight years he was dethroned, tortured, and beheaded, and his mangled trunk was ignominiously cast into the flames (A.D. 610).

19. Gregory's conduct, in not rebuking the cruelty of this tyrant on his accession to the empire, has been strongly censured by some historians. It has been observed that, although as a subject and as a Christian, it was his duty to acquiesce in the established government, yet, that in offering as he did a congratulation to the assassin, on his accession to the empire, he sullied with indelible disgrace the character of the saint; that he should have rebuked with decent firmness the guilt of blood, and urged the necessity of repentance, instead of flattering the tyrant, and praying for his present and eternal welfare. The best and indeed the only apology for the conduct of Gregory is, that he might have been ignorant of many of the circumstances under which he, Phocas, had been raised to the throne; that he knew little or nothing of the cruelties with which it had been accompanied; and that at this time he was so bowed down with infirmities as to be almost incapable of discharging any of the ordinary functions of his office. Gregory died about fifteen months after the promotion of Phocas, and probably had made no inquiry into his infamous transactions. Had health or opportunity offered, or had he been fully informed of his atrocious deeds, the vigour, boldness, and piety of his character, can leave no room to doubt that he would have censured the Roman tyrant as he deserved, and have silenced the accusations which have been thus thrown upon himself. His bodily

afflictions were very severe, as he drew near the end of his life, and he was often forced to return to his bed when he had just left it, by the violence of his sufferings. To what degree, therefore, his condition at this period, and on this occasion, may excuse his conduct towards Phocas we cannot safely judge. But, upon the whole, his character as a man and as a ruler were deserving of the highest praise. The historian who has most strongly condemned this part of his life, sums up his character by passing the highest eulogium upon his general conduct. "The sword of the enemy" he observes, "was suspended over Rome; it was averted by the mild eloquence and seasonable gifts of the pontiff, who commanded the respect of heretics and barbarians. The merits of Gregory were treated by the Byzantine court with reproach and insult; but in the attachment of a grateful people he found the purest reward of a citizen, and the best right of a sovereign."

SUMMARY OF ERA THE EIGHTH.

1. State of Rome at the end of the sixth century.—2. Gregory its restorer; his family; holds the office of prefect, and is sent as an ambassador to Constantinople.—3. Is chosen bishop of Rome; he endeavours at first by an artifice to escape the charge.—4. His pious conduct during the plague at Rome.—5. His employment of the large revenues of the church at his disposal.—6. His devotion to works of charity; his disinterestedness.—7. Singular legend illustrative of his readiness in alms-giving.—8. His remarkable saying concerning riches.—9. His sensibility of conscience; his humility in regard to his office as bishop; denounces the title of Universal Bishop.—10. He acts as an umpire; corresponds with Theudelinda, Queen of the Lombards, &c.—11. Gregory's efforts to convert the Saxons in England; the state of religion in Britain at this time.—12. Circumstance that gave rise to Gregory's design; he sends Augustine and a body of monks to act as missionaries to the English.—13. Ethelbert becomes a Christian and abolishes idolatry in the kingdom of Kent.—14. Edwin, King of Northumbria, embraces Christianity, which extends itself gradually throughout the Heptarchy.—15. Gregory dies before this work is accomplished; his literary labours.—16. His endeavours to improve the church services; conduct with respect to images.—17. The tragical end of Maurice the Emperor and his family.—18. Phocas, his murderer; his fate.—19. Gregory's conduct in regard to Phocas doubtful; his long and severe illness; his general character.

ERA THE NINTH.

THE LIFE OF MAHOMET.

THE RISE OF THE MAHOMETAN RELIGION, AND OF THE EMPIRE OF THE SARACENS.

1. AFTER the death of Theodosius the Great, the eastern branch of the empire of Rome rapidly declined from its former vigour, and from that period to the year 527 there is no Emperor whose name deserves much notice. But between this year and 565, the throne of the East was filled by Justinian—an Emperor of more notoriety, who occupies, in some respects, a conspicuous place in history. The victories gained by his general, Belisarius, over the Vandals in Africa (A.D. 534) and the Goths in Italy (A.D. 537–547) were so considerable, as for a season to threaten the extinction of these formidable enemies, and revived the remembrance of the ancient Roman valour. Justinian is also famous for his piety and learning. He was at once a poet, a philosopher, and a theologian. But he was still more eminent as a legislator. The body of laws which he enacted has ever retained the name of the Justinian Code, and has formed the basis of the principal regulations which have governed the communities of Europe from that time (A.D. 529) to the present day.

About four years after the death of this distinguished Emperor, or A.D. 569, when the empire was governed by Justin the Second, there was born at Mecca a remarkable individual, who was destined to be the founder of a sovereignty still more extensive than had belonged to Rome. The Arabian prophet, Mahomet (or, to write his name more exactly, Mohammed), was a personage whose singular era now

commences. Within half a century from this time he laid the foundation of an empire which, after the lapse of about 800 years, entirely overthrew all that remained of Rome in the East, by the taking of Constantinople.

2. Mahomet sprung from a stock that was considered a noble one; for he belonged to the tribe of Koreish, and the family of Haskew, who were distinguished by being the guardians of the Caaba, or sacred temple at Mecca. He lost all his relatives in early infancy—his father Abdallah, his mother Amina, and his grandfather Abdol-Motalleb. Abu-Taleb, one of his many powerful uncles, became his guardian. The only patrimony he inherited was that of five camels and an Ethiopian female slave. But in his twenty-fifth year (A.D. 594), Mahomet married Cadijah, a rich and noble widow of Mecca, and was thus enabled to break through the barriers of poverty, and to obtain many advantages for his future career.

3. His person and features were much in his favour. According to the testimony of his companions, he was distinguished by the beauty of his countenance—an outward gift which is seldom despised, except by those who do not possess it. The Arabian writers describe him as a man of middle stature, with a large head, a thick beard, eyes black and piercing, a hooked nose, a wide mouth, a large neck, and his hair long and flowing. Among these minute particulars, they do not fail to tell us, that he had between his shoulders a hairy mole, which, for some reason, was regarded as significant of his future dignity and mission.

4. His address and manners were, however, still more remarkable than his person. There was that majesty in his look and presence, which lends so powerful a charm to oratory; and the varied expressions of his face were well suited to win the affections, as well as to subdue the reason, of those to whom he spoke, either in public or in private. He understood, by a sort of natural instinct, the power of his looks and words; and while his countenance painted every emotion of the soul, his gestures enforced every sentiment to which he gave utterance.

5. In the familiar duties of life, he also knew how to obtain the good opinion of those with whom he conversed. He maintained much dignity of manner—a quality always impressive where it can be well sustained, and never forgot

that grave and ceremonious politeness, which was one of the peculiarities of his country. He shewed great veneration for the rich and powerful; but was full of condescension and affability even to the poorest citizens. The artifice of his views was thus concealed by an appearance of frankness where it was required, or by a courtesy which was imputed to personal friendship or universal benevolence. It was thus that he ingratiated himself into the good opinion of his countrymen, and at length obtained a mastery over their thoughts and actions, like that which magicians are supposed to exercise over the spirits of the earth and air, whom they have subdued to work their will and do their bidding.

6. The genius of Mahomet was of a highly contemplative kind, and he had doubtless improved it by his travels as a merchant into the neighbouring countries, and by his intercourse with the pilgrims who came from all parts of the east to visit Mecca. From them, and from the active resources of a mind naturally enquiring and intelligent, he learnt much of the political state and character of the surrounding governments, and the theory and practice of the Jews and Christians. He thus saw enough of the old and new religion of the world to be able to mould and shape a creed after his own fashion, but which was to have something in common with both these systems.

7. To carry out more perfectly and to mature the plan, which he had probably long cherished, of becoming the founder of another religion, and the head of a mighty empire, he retired to a solitary cave in the neighbourhood of Mecca, called the Hera. Here annually, during the fasting season of the year, called Ramadam, he withdrew from the world, to indulge in those beguiling dreams of enthusiasm with which he was afterwards to lead captive the minds of his followers. Spending the day in abstinence and prayer, he came home at night to relate to his wife the mysterious visions and miraculous revelations with which he pretended to have been favoured in his retirement. The angel Gabriel was, according to his account, his frequent visitant, and he had been addressed by him as the Apostle of God. The substance of the book termed the Koran was thus (as he alleged) delivered to him in parts; and fragments of this revelation were, from time to time, repeated by the prophet,

whose disciples afterwards wrote the substance of them upon palm leaves, or perhaps on the skins of animals *. Thus originated this work, which contains, in a large volume, a collection of those fables and observations, political, moral or religious, that form the basis of the creed of the disciples of Mahomet to the present day.

8. The general design of this skilful performance, which is still regarded as the standard of the classical Arabian dialect, is to inculcate the belief and worship of one eternal invisible God; and, with certain laws and ceremonies, to enforce the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, temporal and eternal. But all this doctrine and revelation is made subservient to the purpose of bringing mankind to acknowledge Mahomet as the prophet and ambassador of God, and one commissioned to establish and propagate his religion by force— to act as chief pontiff in spiritual, and supreme prince in temporal matters.

9. The first convert of the pretended prophet was his wife, who listened with fervour to his revelations, and readily believed the truth of his mission, naturally cherishing the glory of her husband. Zeid, an affectionate servant tempted by the prospect of freedom (as may be supposed), was his next disciple. The third was Ali, son of his uncle and guardian Abu-Taleb, who at that time was little more than a boy, but with the spirit of a hero. The fourth was Abu-Beker one of the leading men in Mecca. Through his persuasion, ten of the most respectable citizens were added to the number of proselytes. The principal of these were Othman, Abdal-Rahman, Saad and Ab-Zobeir: all of them became afterwards the bravest of his warriors, and their faith was rewarded with riches and honours.

10. During the space of three years, fourteen persons were all that the prophet could reckon up among the number of the true believers. His doctrines were not, however, as yet taught in public; for though he professed to have many revelations, he feared the opposition and persecution of the Koreish. In the fourth year his courage rose to a higher pitch under the encouragement of Abu-Beker, and he resolved to declare his mission more publicly. For this purpose he gave a banquet to forty guests of the race to

* Some say the shoulder-bones of mutton.

which he belonged (A.D. 609). "Friends and kinsmen," said Mahomet to the assembly,—"I know no man in Arabia who can make to his relations a better proposal than I now make to you. I offer you, and I alone can offer, the most precious of gifts, the treasures of this world and of the world to come. God has commanded me to call you to his service. Who among you will be my companion and my vizir?"* No answer was returned, until at length the silence of doubt or astonishment was broken by the youthful Ali, who exclaimed, "O prophet, I am the man; whosoever rises against thee, I will dash out his teeth, tear out his eyes, break his legs, rip up his belly. O prophet, I will be thy minister." A sentence more significant of the future career of such a man as Mahomet, and of the means by which his triumphs were to be accomplished, was perhaps never uttered. Mahomet understood it to be prophetic, and embraced his nephew with transport; and while his uncle checked this enthusiasm and began to reason with him, the intrepid fanatic cried out that Ali was now his brother, his deputy and khalif, and that all remonstrances were vain. When the company laughed, some of them saying to Abu-Taleb—"Thou must now obey thine own son," the firmness of Mahomet continued unmoved by ridicule or persecution. —"Should you place," said he, "the sun on my right hand, and the moon on my left, you would not divert me from my course."

11. Mahomet now began publicly to preach in earnest the doctrines of the Koran (A.D. 609). But the people of Mecca were strongly addicted to the worship of idols, and the elders of the city affected to despise such a reformer. Abu-Taleb even exhorted the pilgrims not to listen to the tempter, or to his impious novelties. He still, however, protected his nephew from the resentment of the Koreish, who went so far at length in their opposition to the new prophet, as to proscribe his race. They suspended a decree in the sacred temple, making it criminal for any to buy or sell, or marry with the children of Hashem; and that they should be pursued with implacable hatred until the person of Mahomet was delivered (A.D. 613) over to the justice of the gods. In the seventh year of his mission, his cause had advanced

* This word means vicegerent or minister.

so feebly, that the most helpless or timid of his disciples, consisting of eighty-three men, and eighteen women, retired to Ethiopia. He himself thought it necessary to withdraw to some of the castles of his uncle, where he might be more secure. About this time, however, his uncle Hamza, and also Omar, a man of reputation, who had before strongly opposed him, joined the number of his adherents. Shortly after this he lost his uncle, Abu-Taleb and also Cadijah, his wife, so that the Mahometans have given to this year the name of "the year of mourning" (A.D. 622).

12. After the death of Abu-Taleb the cause of the prophet became, to all appearance, still more desperate. A new governor succeeded to the principality of Mecca. Abu-Sophian was a zealous votary of the idols, and a mortal foe of the race of Hashem. He placed himself therefore at the head of a party, who determined upon the death of Mahomet. It was resolved in an assembly of the Koreishites, that a sword from each tribe should be buried in his heart, to divide the guilt of his blood, and to baffle the vengeance of the Hashemites. But the conspiracy was revealed to the prophet, and flight was his only resource. He escaped in the dead of night with Abu-Beker, leaving Ali to personate him by lying in his bed, covered with a green mantle, which he had usually worn. Waiting till morning to perpetrate the deed, the conspirators discovered the trick, and a respect for the heroic piety of the youth made them spare his life. Still pursuing their design, the Koreish, on leaving Abu-Beker's house, explored every haunt in the neighbourhood, and at length arrived at the entrance of the cavern, where the fugitives were concealed. A spider's web, and a pigeon's nest at the mouth of the cave, made the pursuers believe (as it is said) that the place could not be the refuge of human beings, and no search was made for them here. The faith of the enthusiast, was still strong in the imagined favour of heaven, notwithstanding his persecution. When he entered the place of refuge, with the trembling Abu-Beker, the latter observed, as if conscious of impending danger, "There are only two of us here!" "No," replied Mahomet, "there is a third, even God himself; he will defend us." The event did not at least falsify the prediction. As soon as their pursuers had left the spot, Mahomet and his companion again mounted their camels, and taking a circui-

tous path, they arrived at Medina, on the sixteenth day after this flight from Mecca.

13. At a short distance from the town, in which there were numerous converts, they were met by a large body of the inhabitants, with a turban unrolled and carried as a standard before him; and, attended by a number of brave followers, Mahomet now made a public entry into a place where he was soon after acknowledged as a master and chieftain.

This event in the life of Mahomet, termed in the Arabic tongue, The Hegira, or Flight, constitutes that memorable period, which the Mahometan nations have for twelve centuries regarded as the grand era of their religion. From this their lunar year begins, and from this all other events of their chronology are dated. It corresponds with the year of our Lord 622.

14. The affairs of Mahomet took a new turn from the time that his fortunes appeared to be quite desperate. His expulsion from his native city was the first step in a series of fortunate events, which followed him through the remaining ten years of his life. Medina (it will be observed) had, before this, formed an alliance with the pretended apostle, and embraced his doctrines. Some of her noblest citizens had been converted, by hearing him preach during their pilgrimage to the Caaba, and the result was a confederation, in which seventy-three men, and two women, pledged themselves to him by an oath, that if he should be banished, they would obey him as a leader, and defend him to the last extremity. At the ratification of this treaty it was naturally asked, "Will you not abandon your new allies, if you are recalled by your country?" "All things," replied Mahomet, with a smile, "are now common between us; your blood is as my blood, your ruin as my ruin, we are bound together by the ties of honour and interest. I am your friend, and the enemy of your foes." "But if we are killed in your service, what," exclaimed the deputies of Medina, "will be our reward?" "Paradise," replied the prophet. This declaration satisfied all parties in the city, who thus unanimously embraced the profession of his religion. They therefore rejoiced in his exile, and impatiently awaited his arrival. Medina soon became the rallying place of his followers;

his person and his office were regarded here with the highest attachment, veneration, and enthusiasm.

15. Mahomet's first concern in this new establishment, was to build himself a house, and a mosque or temple for religious worship. His followers were directed no longer to turn their faces in prayer towards Jerusalem, but towards Mecca; and they were to keep an annual feast, in the month Ramadan. He now used a seal of gold or silver, inscribed with the title he assumed, "Apostle and prophet of God." He prayed and preached in the weekly assembly, at first beneath the shade of a palm-tree, afterwards in a chair or pulpit of rough timber. At this time, he promoted his domestic interests by marrying Ayesha, the daughter of Abu-Beker, and by giving his daughter Fatima to Ali. He laboured also to strengthen the bonds between himself and his followers, and to ensure their attachment by forming certain refugees from Mecca and the citizens of Medina into one fraternity, in which there was to be only an emulation in courage and fidelity, in peace and war.

16. As soon as he had thus settled himself in the government of this small principality, his plans assumed more of a military character. He armed his followers, and taught them to acquire confidence, and to indulge the Arab fondness for plunder, by allowing them to practise their first lessons on the Syrian traders, who passed through the territory of Medina. The injunctions and precepts of the Koran were also especially fitted to create a nation of intrepid warriors. In the distribution of the spoils which their valour might obtain, the fifth part of the gold and silver and other valuables, were ordered to be set apart for pious and charitable uses; the remainder was to be shared by the soldiers; and the portion which would have been the lot of the slain, was devoted to their widows and orphans. But higher rewards were held out in prospect; and the joys of paradise were promised to all the valiant martyrs of the faith. "The sword," said Mahomet, "is the key of heaven and of hell: a drop of blood shed in the cause of God; a night spent in arms, is of more avail than two months of fasting or prayer: whosoever falls in battle, his sins are forgiven; at the day of judgment his wounds shall be resplendent as vermillion, and odoriferous as musk; the loss

of his limbs shall be supplied by the wings of angels and cherubim." Acting upon these principles, the followers of this impostor were next taught that the season of forbearance was now past; that persuasion had been tried in vain, and that their prophet and apostle was divinely commissioned to propagate his religion by the sword; to destroy the monuments of idolatry, and to chastise the unbelieving nations of the earth.

17. The first great victory achieved by Mahomet, and that which formed the foundation of his future success, was at Beder. A caravan of a thousand camels was on its way to Mecca, laden with rich merchandise, under the command of Abu-Sophian, his old enemy. Leaving Omar to defend Medina, Mahomet marched forth with a band of three hundred and thirteen to meet a force of nearly thrice the number. As he beheld the superior numbers of the Koreish, pouring down from the hills into the valley, where he was waiting for them, he prayed with great vehemence, demanding the succour of Gabriel, and three thousand angels. Then giving orders to his soldiers, to close their ranks, to discharge their arrows, and to consider the victory as their own, he fixed his eye on the field of battle; but seeing that the enemy was still pressing onward, he started from his seat, threw a handful of sand into the air, and cried aloud, "Let their faces be covered with confusion." Both armies heard the thunder of his voice; their fancy beheld angelic warriors; and the Koreish were struck with a panic and fled. Seventy of the bravest of them were slain, and seventy more were taken captives. Two of the most obnoxious were punished with death, and the rest were ransomed for four thousand drams of silver (A.D. 623).

18. On two other occasions he obtained similar advantages over the caravans of the Koreish, the first time making himself master of rich spoils, of which his own fifth amounted to twenty thousand drams. The second of these encounters was at Ohud (A.D. 624). The standard of Mahomet at this time was supported by nine hundred and fifty faithful warriors. But the force of the Koreish numbered three thousand, and was led on by Caled, the fiercest and most successful of the Arabian commanders. Mahomet, on this occasion, was placed in the most imminent danger of losing his life. He was wounded, and carried off the field.

Several of his officers fell, and among the rest Hamza his uncle, and Mosseab the standard-bearer of his troops. The wounded warriors, however, made a skilful retreat, and Abu-Sophian gained nothing of importance by his victory. Mahomet excused his want of success on this day, by ascribing it to the sins of some of those who had engaged in the battle, and he assured those who complained of the loss of their friends, that they died as martyrs, and were translated to the abodes of the blessed.

19. This defeat was only a temporary one. The forces of the enthusiastic prophet and his equally enthusiastic followers were still continually increasing. Various advantages were gained in attacks upon some of the neighbouring tribes; and about six years after the battle of Ohud, the Moslems could bring into the field an army of fifteen hundred men,—all of them so devotedly and superstitiously attached to the service of their master, that a deputy, who was sent from Mecca to his camp, thus reported the veneration of his followers. "I have seen," said he, "the Chosroes of Persia, and the Cæsar of Rome, but never did I behold a king among his subjects, like Mahomet among his companions. They collect his spittle. They gather every hair that drops from his head, and when he washes before prayers, they run and catch the water he has used, supposing it to partake of some virtue which he has imparted to it." To account for this excess of servility among his followers it has been well observed, "that the fervour of enthusiasm acts with more energy and truth than the cold and formal servility of courts."

20. But Mahomet had now obtained a position in which he might achieve the great enterprise of his life, the taking possession of the city of Mecca. Six years had changed the face of affairs, and he who had escaped from Mecca as a fugitive was now in a condition to approach it at the head of a considerable force. But the resistance which the Koreish offered was still of too formidable a nature to be encountered with safety, and he therefore proposed a treaty of amity, by which, at the end of the next year, he was to be permitted to enter the city in the character of a pilgrim. This was a wise stroke of policy; for by it he assumed a show of moderation, and was enabled at a future period, with more certainty, to assert his right to enter it as a conqueror. A truce of ten years was agreed upon, and at the

time appointed, he paid his pacific visit, and with his accompanying Moslems, performed the accustomed ceremonies, at the places which were held sacred. He kissed the black stone of the Caaba—a marble block, reported to have been placed there by the angel Gabriel when it was white, and afterwards turned black for the sins of the people. With his companions he walked in solemn procession, seven times around the temple, and after going through the other rites, practised on such occasions, he concluded the ceremony by sacrificing his seventy camels in the neighbouring valley of Mina (A.D. 628).

21. Two remarkable conversions followed this visit to Mecca; that of Caled the general of the Koreish at Ohud, who was afterwards styled the sword of God, and that of Amrou. Othoman, the guardian of the Caaba, had before this period secretly joined the cause of Mahomet. He had been at one time the guardian of the Caaba. Amrou was also a distinguished person, having formerly been ambassador to Ethiopia. By the aid of these powerful individuals, and by the submission of some of the Arab tribes, Mahomet was enabled at last openly to defy his enemies; and he was soon placed in a condition to visit the city in that character which he had long aspired to do—as a prophet and as a conqueror. Of the ten years' truce, two scarcely had elapsed, when it was violated (as the Moslems affirmed) by the slaughter of some of their allies. A pretext was thus gained for a hostile invasion of the territory of the Koreish. Mahomet was now at the head of a large army, and the guardians of Mecca were soon made aware of his designs. The blaze of ten thousand torches amidst the darkness of night, revealed to the affrighted Koreish the near advances of an irresistible force. As soon as the sun appeared, Mahomet, riding upon his favourite camel, and arrayed in a scarlet robe, presented himself before the gates of Mecca, which opened without delay to receive him, and he entered as a conqueror, reciting aloud the promise of victory recorded in one of the chapters of the Koran. His haughty rival Abu-Sophian, holding out to him the keys of the city, observed that the son of Abdallah had indeed now acquired a mighty kingdom, and that he could not but acknowledge him to be the Apostle of the true God. His first visit was to the Caaba, where he at once destroyed its three hundred and sixty idols, and proclaimed his mission.

Turning to every part of the interior of the temple, he cried with a loud voice "God is great, and Mahomet is his Apostle." "This," said he to his followers, "is your Kebla"—(that is, the place to which they were to turn their faces whenever they prayed). He then explained his doctrines more fully to the people, and continued preaching until the hour of sunset (A.D. 629).

22. Meanwhile his troops had marched through the city in three divisions, and though eager for massacre, were restrained by the clemency of the victors. Only eight-and-twenty of the inhabitants were put to death by the sword of Caled, and a much smaller number afterwards by the orders of the conqueror. The principal persons of the Koreish were, however, summoned to the presence of Mahomet, who sternly proposed to them the question, "What mercy can you expect from the man whom you have so much wronged?" "We confide," they replied, "in the generosity of our kinsman." "Then you shall not confide in vain," replied Mahomet: "Begone; you are safe and free." The care of the sacred temple was committed again to Othman, and, for the first time, the muezzin, or public crier of Mahomet, announced in his name the hour of prayer from the top of it. A law was also enacted, that henceforth no unbeliever should dare to set foot within the limits of the holy city. Thus, after an exile of seven years, he who had been expelled from Mecca, as a fanatical visionary, returned to it under circumstances that fulfilled his most enthusiastic hopes, being fully acknowledged there as the prince and prophet of his native country.

23. On a subsequent visit to Mecca, which is called the pilgrimage of valediction, because it was his farewell visit, Mahomet was accompanied thither by a hundred and fourteen thousand proselytes. On this occasion, besides attending to the ceremonies before described, he made a larger exposition of the doctrines of his religion, and gave a lengthened explanation of the various ceremonies which he had taught his disciples in the Koran (A.D. 630).

24. The conquest of Mecca determined the faith and obedience of the tribes who had not yet submitted to him. He was now in a position to defend himself from the attacks of any distant enemy, and although he sustained a partial defeat, and the loss of Zeid and two others of his best

generals in the battle of Muta, which was fought with the forces of the Eastern Emperor in the following year or A.D. 630, he had the prudence to declare that he had no divine command to prosecute this war; especially as his troops murmured at continuing it, during the season of harvest, and the intolerable heat of summer. Leading them, therefore, through the direct region between Damascus and Medina, to a place of greater safety, he consented to accept the treaty of peace which was offered him by Heraclius, the Emperor of the East, and which thus secured him from the only enemy he had reason to dread.

25. On his return to Medina, his conduct to the deputies of Tayef, a city about sixty miles east of Mecca, which had formerly afforded him a place of shelter, and which he had lately besieged without success, plainly shewed his resolute determination to make no compromise of his principles. Wishing, if they surrendered their city, to preserve their religion, the deputies said, "O Apostle of God, grant us a truce of three years, with the toleration of our ancient worship!" "Not a month,—nor an hour," replied the indignant Mahomet. "Excuse us, then, from the obligation of prayer,"—added the suppliants. "Without prayer," replied their teacher, "religion is of no avail." They were thus compelled to surrender upon his own terms, and to embrace a religion which sentenced their temples and idols to immediate destruction (A.D. 632).

26. Nothing could exceed the prudence and energy displayed by Mahomet in all military matters. By a judicious division of the various spoils which he collected from time to time, he recalled his soldiers to their duties, however severe, and often conciliated even his enemies. As a warrior he manifested the highest degree of personal courage in the field. He fought in person at nine battles or sieges. His own ardour and enthusiasm must have been great, and it was shared by his lieutenants, for by the help of these, not less than fifty martial enterprises were achieved in ten years. Towards the close of his life his fame was spread abroad throughout an extensive region. On the shores of the Red Sea, and of the Persian Gulf, his authority was generally acknowledged, and ambassadors came from all parts to do him homage at his court of Medina, and they were as many

in number, says an Arabian proverb, as the dates are that fall from a mature palm-tree.

27. But the brilliant career of this successful religionist and conqueror was not to be extended to a great length, and was cut short about two years after he had attained the pinnacle of his greatness by the conquest of Mecca. For some time previous to this event, his health had undergone a change for the worse, and his bodily maladies were increasing. He himself attributed this to the effects of a slow poison which he imagined had been given to him in a shoulder of mutton on which he had supped at the house of a Jewess, in the city of Chaibar, after its capitulation. But his mortal disease was a fever of fourteen days, which at intervals deprived him of his reason. During this period he beheld with firmness the approach of death; enfranchised many of his slaves, and expressed a desire to make a restitution to any whom he had injured. He also gave orders respecting his funeral, and, on the third day before his death, he attended the mosque and prayed for the pardon of his sins. After this he was confined to his apartment, and his end drew near; he told his friends that the angel of death had asked his permission to approach him, and that he had consented. Reclining his head on the lap of Ayesha, his favourite wife, who had nursed him during his illness, he peaceably expired on a carpet spread upon the floor, and his last broken, though articulate words, were, "O God! pardon my sins—Yes, I come among my fellow-citizens on high."

28. Thus died (A.D. 632), the greatest perhaps of all religious impostors, whose life and death were equally a splendid falsehood. His followers could scarcely believe, for some time afterwards, that their prophet was really dead, but imagined that he was wrapt in some holy trance, and that he would again return to life. Omar, unsheathing his scimitar, threatened to strike off the heads of any who affirmed that their prophet was no more. This tumult of folly was at length appeased by Abu-Beker, who exclaimed to Omar and the multitude.—"Is it Mahomet, or the God of Mahomet, whom you worship? The God of Mahomet liveth for ever, but his apostle was a mortal like ourselves, and according to his own prediction in the Koran, he has

shared the common fate of mortals." His body was buried at Medina, after being embalmed in camphor and the most fragrant aromatics. A simple tomb was erected over his remains; and though the story of his coffin being suspended in the air by loadstones is a pure fable, it is a striking image of the attractive influence of that name and creed, which has drawn the hearts of so many, in all ages, to the place where their prophet lies interred—a pilgrimage to this spot being regarded, as one of the most meritorious and necessary acts of the Mahometan religion.

29. Of the character of this extraordinary man, it is difficult to form a very clear idea. Much of his history is involved in obscurity or doubt, and it would be impossible to determine how much he believed of what he taught. From enthusiasm to imposture the transition is easy and rapid. Thus much, however, is certain: He did not pretend to work miracles, and when these were demanded of him by the inhabitants of Mecca and Medina, to attest the truth of his pretended revelations, he replied, "that though Moses and Jesus had proved the heavenly origin of their missions by the exhibition of supernatural powers, yet that the world was still lost in unbelief, and miracles were fruitless." "Let the angel Gabriel make delicious gardens for us in the midst of the desert," said his taunting enemies; "let the powers of heaven transport us and our merchandise in a moment to the fairs of Syria." "No!" replied Mahomet, "though a Koran were revealed by which mountains could be removed, or the earth were travelled over as quickly as the wish was formed, or if the dead should be commanded to speak, it would be in vain.

"All things are in my power," he continued, "but incredulity to the evidence of miracles is an unpardonable offence: my affection for you exceeds my wishes for your conversion, and will not permit me to risk the salvation of your souls, by offering you a testimony which your present sceptical habit of mind makes me think it possible you may reject."

30. Still the people were more importunate: and the pretended apostle of God, though he had too much policy to endanger the credit of his cause by prophecies which were to be speedily fulfilled, or by commanding the obedience of the powers of nature, yet presuming on his

reputation for veracity, he solemnly assured his disciples that the veil between him and the Almighty had been removed, and that he had been transported to the heaven of heavens. On a white beast, less than a mule, but larger than an ass, Mahomet pretended that he was conveyed from the temple of Mecca to that of Jerusalem, with his companion Gabriel; that he had successively ascended the seven heavens, and received and repaid the salutations of the patriarchs, the prophets, and the angels in their respective mansions. Beyond the seventh heaven (thus runs the marvellous tale) he alone was permitted to proceed: he passed the veil of Unity, approached within two bow shots of the throne, and felt a coldness that pierced him to the heart, when his shoulder was touched by the hand of God. The Deity commanded him to pray fifty times a day. By the advice of Moses, he applied for an alleviation of this intolerable burthen; the obligation was gradually relaxed, until the number was settled at five. After this familiar, though important conversation, he descended to Jerusalem, and, remounting the mysterious animal, returned to Mecca: thus performing in the tenth part of a night, the journey of many thousand years. The venerable Abu-Beker vouched for the authenticity of the story, and the people were either silenced or convinced.

31. A tale so boldly conceived, and poetically told, appealed to the warm imagination and enthusiasm of his countrymen. It was not, however, until the twelfth year of his mission, that he professed himself to have made this celebrated journey; and when he first told the story to his uncle Al-Abbas, and to another of his followers, they thought it so incredible, that they entreated him not to relate it to the people. But he persisted, and though some of his party left him on that account, and others treated him with more ridicule than before, the "cunningly devised fable" was afterwards thought worthy of belief by a large number of his disciples, who, not satisfied with his own disavowal of signs and wonders, have attributed to him more than three thousand miracles, which have just as much claim to be believed. The more learned of his followers, in after times, have interpreted this account of his night journey as a mere dream or vision.

32. Pretensions of this kind, it is evident, require some-

thing more than mere assertion to rest upon. Whoever examines them by the light of reason alone, will at once see their futility. But when compared with the miracles recorded in the life of the founder of the Christian faith, they must appear contemptible indeed; and as inferior in point of credibility to any of these, as the Koran itself is, in its whole structure and composition, to the volume of the Holy Scriptures.

33. The public life of Mahomet gives sufficient evidence of the fact, that ambition was the ruling passion of his later years; and a politician will suspect that he secretly smiled at the enthusiasm of his youth, and at the credulity of his dupes. Fraud and perfidy, cruelty and injustice, were considered by him as justifiable deeds. Jews and idolaters who had escaped from the field of battle, were afterwards murdered in cold blood, on the ground that all this was subservient to the propagation of the faith.

In his private life, there was a want of that temperance and self-control which are inseparable from virtue. The laws of chastity were grossly violated by this impostor, and with singular audacity. Not to mention the number of his wives, and the licence which he pretended was given to him to have as many as he pleased, his apologists have admitted the fact, that he indulged the vices of a man in this respect, and entirely forgot his reputation as a prophet. He did not scruple to plead divine authority for the indulgence of his most criminal desires; and inserted passages in the Koran, for the artful purpose of shielding himself from the obloquy of such deeds.

34. The simplicity of his diet; his contempt for the splendours of royalty; his jealous care to guard his followers from the dangerous effects of intoxicating liquors; his judicious precepts on the subject of many of the general duties of morality, and especially with regard to the poor and unfortunate, may be regarded with that degree of approbation, which all acknowledge to be justly due to virtues of this kind. But these can afford no apology for those extravagances into which Mahomet was hurried by the violence of his passions. "The laws which he prescribed for the regulation of these, were too loose for the most compliant moralist to justify, and too favourable to afford the most abandoned sensualist any probable ground of complaint.

That the impostor, by the opinions which he introduced, really improved the manners of the Arabs, cannot perhaps be denied. The religion which he established, amidst all its errors and absurdities, possesses many principles in common with the true religion, and is doubtless in every respect, far preferable to that absurd and monstrous idolatry which was then the prevailing creed of Arabia. But when we consider its larger diffusion, and the excellence of that more perfect and pure system of doctrines and morals, which it threatened to destroy, and whose benignant influence it still continues fatally to obstruct; when we call to mind the immense multitudes of our fellow-creatures, who are yet involved by its delusions in the most profound darkness and error, our opinion concerning Mahomet and his imposture must be a most unfavourable one."

35. To this conclusion of a distinguished writer on the subject, we may here add that the experience of a thousand years, during which his religion has borne rule among the nations of the East, proves its utter inability to advance mankind in the career of social or intellectual improvement. It cannot be said, that the professors of this form of religion are in any part of the world growing better or wiser than their fathers. The grand tendency of the Mahometan system is, to keep mankind always stationary, in arts and knowledge, and in all the privileges of social life. It does not possess within it, like Christianity, the means of gradually advancing the human race, to higher attainments of virtue or excellence of any kind: in a word, that freedom of the mind, which is man's noblest birthright in all climates, and without which he must ever be more or less a slave, can never be enjoyed under a religion whose ruling tenet is, to represent all those who do not acknowledge the apostleship of Mahomet as enemies, with whom it is dangerous or impious to hold converse, and whom it is meritorious in the sight of God to destroy.

36. A brief sketch of the successors of Mahomet, and of the progress of the empire which he founded, up to that period when this power in Europe became a divided and broken one, is here inserted, as an appropriate sequel to the life of this impostor.

After his death Abu-Beker, took the office of Caliph, that is, a successor or substitute. Under his Caliphate

Syria was invaded. The city of Bosra was first taken, and then Damascus. Abu-Beker was on his death-bed when he heard of this event, two years after he succeeded to his office, or A.D. 634.

37. The last battle of the Greeks, the successors of the Roman Empire of the East, in defence of Syria, was fought on the banks of the Yermouk, a small stream that discharges itself into the Sea or Lake of Tiberias. This was under the Caliphate of Omar, who succeeded Abu-Beker, and reigned ten years. Jerusalem had been taken (A.D. 637), by the Saracens under Abu-Obeidah, and the mosque which stands on the ancient site of Solomon's temple and of that afterwards erected on the same spot, is a monument of this event, bearing the name of the Mosque of Omar. Among other laws to which the Christians who dwelt here were subjected, were the following:—They could not wear the same kind of dress as their conquerors, nor use the same surnames, nor ride upon saddles, nor bear any sort of arms. They could not any longer set up the cross upon their churches, and could only toll their bells, not being permitted to ring them; and they were to pay a perpetual tax or tribute. From that time to the present, with the exception of about ninety years during which the Holy City was recovered by the Crusaders and their successors, it has been under the power of Mahometan oppressors, or to use the language of prophecy—"trodden down of the Gentiles."

38. Another great conquest of the reign of Omar was that of the city of Antioch, once the head of all the cities of the East. It was taken by the Saracens (A.D. 638), and Heraclius the Greek Emperor saved himself only by a disgraceful flight to Constantinople. In the same year, Amrou, one of Mahomet's most valiant warriors, conquered Egypt and took possession of its capital, Alexandria. Persia was next added to the Caliphate (A.D. 640), and the body of the nation became converts to the religion of the sword, having no alternative but that of conversion or death. The Christians and Jews only, as having a written record of their faith, had the choice of conversion or tribute,—a principle which was always recognised in their case, by the directions of the Apostle of the Arabs during their conquests.

39. Omar died by the hand of an assassin (A.D. 644), or

in the twenty-third year of the Hegira, and his successor was Othman. Under his reign of ten years the empire of the Saracens extended itself over large districts in Armenia and Mesopotamia; and his general, Abdallah, pushed on his conquests as far as Tripoli, in Africa. Through the instigation of Ayesha, the widow of Mahomet, a conspiracy was formed against him and he was murdered (A.D. 654).

40. Ali, the son of Abu-Taleb, was next elected to that vast and splendid empire, which already included Arabia, Persia, Syria, and Egypt. He was one of the earliest converts of Mahomet, and distinguished himself by having enthusiastically embraced his cause, when he first proclaimed his mission. He was called to the office of Caliph by the suffrages of the inhabitants of Mecca and Medina; but his reign was a short and troubled one. He was accused of being concerned in the death of Othman, the favourite of the army. He mastered his enemies in the field of battle, but fell by the dagger of the assassin in the Mosque of Cufa (A.D. 660).

41. Moawiyah was now raised to the empire by the voice of the army, which prevailed over that of the Cufians, who saluted Hassan, the eldest son of Ali, as Caliph. The latter, however, soon retired to a life of ease and piety at Medina. He was the grandson of Mahomet, Ali having married his daughter Fatima. Hassan was, not long after, poisoned by his wife; and Hosein, his brother, was slain in an attempt to regain his rights. The descendants of Ali were thus for ever excluded from the Universal Caliphate, but have always been regarded as the genuine nobility of the empire, being of the royal race, or descendants from Mahomet; in Syria and Turkey they are called Emirs. In Arabia and other and places, Scherifs or Saids. Their distinguishing mark is a green turban.

42. The rival who supplanted this race was of the same tribe, though not of the same family with Mahomet, and was the son of Abu-Sophian, his most active persecutor for a long period. Setting aside the claims of his direct descendants, and the children of Abbas, the prophet's uncle, who were next in succession, Moawiyah founded a line of princes, known afterwards as the Ommiades, who retained possession of the throne for ninety years.

At the end of this time, a revolution took place in favour

of Il-Drakim, son of the great grandson of Abbas. From this time, the empire took the form of three distinct principalities, in Europe, Africa, and Asia, governed respectively by the Caliphs of Spain, of Egypt or Africa, and of Bagdad. This division took place A.D. 750, and the conquests of the Saracens had, by this time, extended over large portions of Spain and Africa. They embraced Tangiers, Tripoli, and Carthage, and, in short, all the settlements of the Greco-Roman Empire, on the southern coasts of the Mediterranean. Some idea of the energetic manner in which these conquests were obtained, may be learnt from an anecdote told of one of the great Moslem generals at this period. Ackbar, the general of the Caliph Moawiyah, crossed the wilderness in which were afterwards erected the cities of Fez and Morocco, and arrived at the Atlantic Ocean, near the mouth of the river Susa. Spurring his horse at once into the waves, and raising his eyes to heaven, he exclaimed—"Great God! if my course were not stopped by this sea, I would still go on to the unknown kingdoms of the West, preaching the unity of thy Holy name, and putting to the sword the rebellious nations who worship any God but thee!"

43. Spain had fallen under this dominion during the reign of Roderic, the last of the Gothic kings (A.D. 711), and became the seat of the Moors. About twenty years later, or A.D. 731, the Saracens hoisted their standard at Bourdeaux, at Tours, at Lyons, and Besancon. But while they were thus preparing to overrun all Europe, their progress was stopped by Charles Martel and the Germans. Between Tours and Poictiers, a bloody battle was fought, which changed the history of the world. The victory of the French was final. The Arabs were driven out of Languedoc, Provence, and other parts of the south of France, and thus, by the agency of Providence, the western world was enabled to oppose a barrier, which saved it from the further oppression of the Mahometan yoke.

44. After this period (A.D. 759) Asia became the chief scene of the invasions of this formidable power, which spread itself over the greater part of India, and the adjacent regions during the three following centuries. About the year 849 a fleet of Arabs and Moors sailed from Sardinia, and cast anchor at the mouth of the Tiber, about sixteen miles from

Rome, for the purpose of laying siege to the city. But Pope Leo the Fourth received them with a spirit worthy of a better age. A large number of them fell into his hands, having been overtaken by storm and shipwreck. The Pope made his captives labour in the fortifications of the city, which they had hoped to demolish. The churches of St. Peter and St. Paul, which might have been exposed to the plunder of the barbarians, were embellished with much splendour from the spoils of the naval victory, won by the aid of the maritime states, who were the vassals of the Greek Empire. On this occasion, thirteen Arabian bows of pure and massy silver, were suspended round the altar of St. Peter's; and the sanctuary, besides being repaired with great expense, was decorated with a plate of gold, of the weight of two hundred and sixteen pounds, embossed with the portraits of the Pope and Emperor, and encircled with a string of pearls.

45. From this period, no very great or successful effort was made by the Mahometan arms in any part of Europe until the fifteenth century. At this time, the Ottoman Turks, who originally derived their origin from the plains which border on the north of the Caspian Sea, had become a powerful people. Through a line of princes, representing what is called the Seljukian or Turcoman dynasties, who had overspread the plains of Western Asia, expelled the Arabian princes of Aleppo and Damascus, and occupied the throne of Persia, under the title of Sultans, they succeeded at length to all the eastern dominions of the Saracens, and under Othoman, or Athman, who founded the race of Ottomans (A.D. 1299) their power became greatly augmented. By his descendants, the seat of the Greco-Roman Empire, under the reign of Constantine Palæologus, was attacked, and finally taken possession of by Mahomet the Second; for whom was reserved a still more striking distinction than belonged to the first hero who bore the name. The siege and conquest of Constantinople thus achieved (A.D. 1453), established the throne of the Moslems in Europe, and put an end to that empire of the East which had lasted from the time of Constantine the Great, or upwards of a thousand years.

SUMMARY OF ERA THE NINTH.

1. Introductory. The empire of the East, under Justinian; the victories of his general Belisarius; birth of Mahomet in the reign of Justin the Second.—2. The descent of Mahomet; the first advancement of his fortunes.—3. His personal recommendations.—4. His persuasive eloquence.—5. His ingratiating manners.—6. The genius of Mahomet.—7. He retires to the cave of Hera, and pretends to receive there a new revelation.—8. The design of the Koran.—9. His first converts.—10. His declaration of his Apostleship; his cause embraced by Ali.—11. He proceeds to preach the doctrines of the Koran, and to announce his Apostleship; meets with great opposition.—12. The conspiracy of the Koreish against him; flies to Medina.—13. Reaches the city; the Hegira.—14. He establishes himself at Medina; his cause there successful.—15. He builds himself a house and mosque; marries the daughter of Abu-Beker.—16. He arms his followers; they attack the caravans; their incitements to these enterprises.—17. Mahomet gains a battle at Beder.—18. The defeat at Ohud.—19. He is again successful against some Arabian tribes; great enthusiasm of his followers.—20. He meditates the taking possession of Mecca; consents to a treaty for visiting the city as a pilgrim with his followers.—21. Conversion of Caled and Amrou; the truce is violated; Mahomet proceeds to Mecca with his forces; is admitted without opposition, as a conqueror.—22. His treatment of the inhabitants; his hopes fulfilled.—23. The pilgrimage of valediction.—24. Submission of other tribes; he engages with the army of Heraclius in Syria; accepts a treaty of peace.—25. His conduct to the deputies of Tayef.—26. Mahomet's military successes; the great extension of his power.—27. His last illness and death.—28. Enthusiasm of his followers after this event; his burial.—29. Character of the impostor; his refusal to work miracles.—30. His pretended journey to the seventh heaven.—31. The tale at first rejected; the miracles afterwards ascribed to him.—32. Absurdity of such pretensions.—33. Vices of

the public and private life of Mahomet.—34 and 35. His virtues; he makes some beneficial laws; the general tendency of his religion.

36. Sketch of Mahomet's successors; Abu-Beker.—37. Omar's reign; Jerusalem taken by the Saracens.—38. Further victories during his Caliphate.—39. Othman succeeds.—40. Ali reigns; the extent of his empire.—41. Moawiyah becomes Caliph; the descendants of Mahomet excluded.—42. The Ommiades and their dynasty; the Caliphate divided; the Moors and their kingdom.—43. The conquests of the Saracens in Spain and Europe; their progress checked by Charles Martel.—44. Their spread in India; defeat in Italy.—45. The Turks succeed to their power, and overthrow the Greco-Roman Empire of the East.

ERA THE TENTH.

THE LIFE OF CHARLEMAGNE.

THE RESTORATION OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF ROME, AND THE RISE OF THE GERMANIC EMPIRE.

1. "THE appellation of great," says Gibbon, "has been often bestowed, and sometimes deserved, but Charlemagne is the only prince in whose favour the title has been indissolubly united with the name."

Before we can enter with advantage upon the history of this sovereign—who was one of those persons who, to use the idea of Shakspeare, are not only, "born great, and achieve greatness, but have greatness thrust upon them"—it is necessary to take a brief view of the history of that nation, which had the honour to give birth to a hero, thus distinguished above all those who lived at this period.

2. The Franks, from whom Charlemagne descended, were originally one of the Gothic tribes, which established themselves in the neighbourhood of the Lower Rhine. About the period when the Romans left Britain never to return, and the Saxons came to their aid against the Scots and Picts (A.D. 449), there arose among these military adventurers, a chieftain more eminent than the rest, who earned for himself by his valour, and his sword, the title of Meroveus, or Merowing—and became the founder of a race of princes, who are styled the kings of France, during a dynasty which lasted for about 300 years, (or from A.D. 448 to 752). Twenty sovereigns, including Meroveus, are reckoned as belonging to this race. Of these, Clovis is first remembered, as the earliest prince of his nation who became a Christian;

having received the rite of Baptism in the cathedral of Rheims, together with a large retinue of soldiers, after a great victory obtained over the Germans (A.D. 481–511). During the reigns of his successors, the kingdom was divided into several small principalities, as that of Paris, Soissons, Rheims, and Orleans; of which, however, the heritage still existed after various dissensions and struggles, in two branches of the family, one of whom exercised authority over Austrasia, the southern division of the kingdom, the other over Neustria or the more northern.

3. Of these territories the city of Cologne was the capital belonging to the former, and Paris to that of the latter. Among the sovereigns who reigned over these kingdoms from Childebert the First to Childebert the Second (A.D. 511–668), embracing a period of a hundred and fifty-seven years, there are none whose names are distinguished, except for deeds of savage cruelty and barbarism. Clotaire, brother of Childebert the First, having conquered his rebellious son, shut him up in a cottage where he had taken refuge after being defeated in battle, with his wife and children, and having given orders that they should be fastened to stakes with chains of iron, he set fire to the four corners of the building, and a whole family of his own kindred, the victims of his wrath, were thus burnt alive. This monster soon after died of inexpressible remorse (A.D. 562), leaving his kingdom to be divided among the rest of his children, who profited but little by the gift, and embroiled themselves in quarrels, which ended in the extinction of one branch of it, that of Sigibert lord of Austrasia.

Clotaire the Second, the son of Fredegonda (who is said to have been the murderer of five kings), having by his crimes and those of his mother become master of the empire of the Franks (A.D. 584), bequeathed at his death, the whole of the provinces of Gaul to his son Dagobert (A.D. 628). But by this time, the mayors of the palace to whom the education of the royal line was entrusted, and who exercised a sort of regency in the affairs of the empire, during the minority of the princes, had acquired a power which made them not only the prime ministers, but virtually the sovereigns of the state. This ascendancy became still more visible, during the reigns of the sons of Dagobert who succeeded him, the one with the title of Sigibert the Third,

king of Austrasia; the other bore the name of Clovis the Second, king of Neustria. The first was aged eight years, and the other only four, on the death of their father (A.D. 638). These princes as they grew up found themselves reduced to an empty shadow of royalty, under the guardianship of their respective mayors, who were in reality the sovereigns, acting as they did in concert with, and under the advice of the most powerful of the Frankish and Burgundian lords. Clovis the Second, who, on the death of his brother a short time after his accession, succeeded to the whole empire of the Franks, was the first of the line of princes upon whom the epithet of sluggard has been bestowed, to mark their character. Being fonder of indolence and of pleasure than of the cares of royalty, they entirely abandoned the reins of empire to their ministers, who thus eventually usurped the dominion entrusted to them by the legitimate, but unworthy successors of the empire.

It was thus that, during the reign of Thierry the Second (A.D. 720), who had been raised to the kingdom of Neustria on the death of Dagobert the Second, Pepin of Heristal laid the foundation of an empire, which his posterity at length enlarged and extended, not only over the Frankish nation but over a large part of Europe.

4. Having with the aid of the lords of Austrasia dethroned the sluggish king Dagobert, he obtained, as the reward of intrepidity and ambition, the title of Duke of Austria, a dignity which was in effect the possession of the kingdom itself, Dagobert being the last of the Austrasian princes. His next step was to become Mayor of the palace of Neustria, an office which the feeble sovereign Thierry could not withhold, as he was constrained to submit to the terms which his conqueror imposed, against whom he had taken the field without success. From that period Pepin D'Heristal became in reality the sovereign, while Thierry, retaining the name, and shut up in his palace, bore only the ensigns of royalty. The heir of Pepin was the illustrious Charles Martel, who acquired his title from the heavy blows which he inflicted upon his enemies in the field of battle. His valour and success were seen in the manner in which he defeated the Neustrians, who had revolted against the lawful heir of the empire Dagobert the Third, and thus restored himself to the possession of that place of trust and power in

the palace, which his ancestor had enjoyed. In defending the kingdom, however, from the attacks of its enemies the Saxons, the Frisons and the Gascons, and especially from the inroads of the Saracens of Spain, he more fully justified his title by subduing them, as the hammer does the iron on the anvil. When the latter rushed down from the Pyrenees, with the violence of a torrent upon the fertile plains of Gaul, Charles Martel stopped their progress, met the host near Poictiers led on by Abderame, a distinguished general, and defeated them with great slaughter (A.D. 732). It was thus that he saved Europe from an attack that might have been as fatal to the religion of the cross as it was in Spain, where the crescent of the Saracens had now been triumphant for about 50 years.

5. Pepin, surnamed the Short, on account of his low stature, succeeded to the name and reputation of his father, Charles Martel. His courage and ambition were equally apparent. It is said that, on a certain occasion, the lords of the court being assembled to witness a combat between a bull and a lion, Pepin seeing the bull nearly worsted, leaped into the arena, and, drawing his sword, smote off the lion's head with one blow; and when all were struck with astonishment at his temerity, and at the vigour of his arm, he turned towards those who were near him, and with a loud voice demanded if they did not think him sufficiently courageous to be a king. No one doubted from thenceforth what his designs were, and it was plain that the office of Mayor of the palace, which he now held for Childeric the Third (A.D. 742), did not satisfy his disposition. Childeric was destined to be the last sovereign of the Merovingian race, for Pepin, finding himself master of the empire of the Franks, speedily decided upon taking the title of king; but previously to his doing so, he sent to consult the bishop of Rome on this step, who replied that he alone ought to be king who exercised the royal power. Interpreting this as a mandate in his favour, Pepin caused the head of young Childeric to be shorn of his long hair (which was an indispensable qualification for royalty among the Franks), and shut him up in a convent, where he remained during the rest of his life. The usurper being raised upon a kind of buckler, as was the custom among the barbarians, when they elected a new monarch, the lords of the Franks declared that they accepted

him as their future sovereign; and St. Boniface, the most courageous and venerable of the missionaries of Germany, placed the crown upon the head of Pepin, in order to make it appear that he had received from the hand of God that power with which he was already entrusted by his fellow mortals.

Charlemagne was about seven years old, when his father Pepin thus assumed the name of king (A.D. 750). His mother was daughter of Charibert, Count of Laon. But of his education little is known; and the first occasion upon which he becomes conspicuous on the scene of history is connected with a remarkable incident—the visit of Stephen, the bishop or pope of Rome, to implore the assistance of the warlike sovereign of the Franks against Astolphus king of the Lombards (A.D. 754). The papal chair was in no small danger at this time, for Astolphus had demanded an immense tribute of the citizens of Rome, and even prepared to compel the payment by an armed force. To defend himself from so powerful an enemy, the Pope hastened across the Alps. To welcome him, and to give him an assurance of assistance, Pepin, who was now returning from one of his expeditions against the Saxons, dispatched his eldest son Charles, then scarcely twelve years old, on this mission;—a circumstance which renders it probable that the bodily and mental powers of the prince were far beyond those of his age, or he would not have been fitted to discharge the office entrusted to him by his father.

6. At this period, the power of the Popes was not sufficient to inspire that awe in the minds of monarchs which it did in after times. But Pepin having usurped the authority of a prince, without that title which is supposed to confer a right to it, was gratified at the opportunity now presenting itself, of having his claim fully decided by the spiritual mandate of a Pope, who would naturally be ready to approve himself grateful to his deliverer. Fortifying his purpose to vindicate the rights of Rome, by the consent of his principal warriors, in what was then called a Champ de Mars, from its being the great assembly of the Franks, which determined upon all warlike matters, Pepin set out with an immense army. First, however, he obtained from Pope Stephen a sentence of absolution for the breach of his oath of allegiance to Childeric, and the repetition of the ceremony

of his coronation in the church of St. Denis. The Pope also ventured to pronounce his anathema upon all those who should hereafter doubt the rights of the newly-anointed sovereign and his family. And Charlemagne, or Charles as he was then called, and his brother Carloman, were crowned with their parents by the Roman Pontiff (A.D. 754).

7. On this occasion the conquest of the Lombards was an easy one, and Astolphus was compelled to yield up the Exarchate, to which the Pope laid some claim. Pepin who, in taking possession of it, assumed only the rights conceded to his predecessor Charles Martel, Exarch of Ravenna, became thus the representative of the ancient Emperors of Rome. He was styled also the Patrician, an office which not only gave a supreme authority in the city of Rome, but connected itself with the temporal jurisdiction over certain Italian provinces, of which Ravenna was the seat or capital. From this period, the rights conferred by this office have been considered as belonging to the See of Rome, by a grant from Pepin. However this may have been, it was not until a later period that a title to the whole patrimony of the church was acquired, and that the Pope possessed a full and independent claim to the privileges of the Exarchate.

8. Charlemagne, by following his father in his various campaigns, must, when he arrived at the age of manhood, have acquired abundant experience in the art of war. But the first time in which he appears in the military character, is in the war carried on by Pepin against Aquitaine (A.D. 768). Towards the latter end of this year Pepin died, leaving his empire between his two sons. Neustria, comprising a part of France which extended from the mouth of the Scheld to the source of the Marne, and the mouth of the Loire, was the inheritance of Charles. To his brother Carloman was assigned the kingdom of Austrasia. The latter dying about three years afterwards (A.D. 771), and leaving only an infant family, the crown of that kingdom was immediately offered to Charlemagne by the Franks, and accepted by him (A.D. 772). The whole of France was thus again united under one sceptre. Although this empire stretched from the Mediterranean to the ocean, and from the Pyrenees to the Alps; and, considering its people and resources, was the most powerful in Europe, yet its sovereign had a variety of

difficulties to encounter. At this time he saw his throne placed in danger, by the number of his enemies, whom his father and grandfather had but imperfectly conquered. The Frisons, the Bavarians, the Sclavonians, and the Saxons, were becoming more bold and menacing. In Italy and in Spain also, his enemies were ready to take arms. Surrounded, however, as he was by dangerous foes, he knew how to combat with them, and to vanquish them all in succession. Among the wars which first demanded the exercise of his skill and courage, must be noticed those of Saxony. In the second century of the Christian Era, the Saxons were only an insignificant tribe of barbarians, inhabiting with several other tribes, the small peninsula of Jutland, and three islands at the mouth of the Elbe. But in the time of Charlemagne, their possessions were much enlarged, and extended along the banks of the Rhine, nearly to the Oder, and from the confines of Hesse and Thuringia to the North Sea. They were still, however, up to this period, a race of cruel savages; and in turning the first efforts of his arms against them, one of the objects which the son of Pepin had in view was, we are told, to reclaim them from Paganism, and to introduce among them the blessings of the Christian religion.

9. During the many wars which he carried on against Saxony, arising from the faithlessness of a people who were always ready to revolt, when a favourable occasion presented itself, this end was always kept in view. In almost every battle with these adversaries Charlemagne proved victorious; but it was not till after eighteen invasions of their territory that they were effectually subdued, and that Christianity fully triumphed in Saxony. The Saxons were idolaters, and to oppose idolatry in every form was one great principle of Charlemagne's conduct. At an early period of his warfare with this people, he attacked and destroyed their great idol temple *, termed the Irminsula, or Hermansaule (A.D. 772),

* The chief figure was an armed warrior holding in his right hand a banner, in which a red rose was conspicuous; its left presented a balance. The crest of the helmet was a cock. On the breast of the figure was engraven a bear, and the shield hanging from its shoulders shewed a lion in a field full of flowers. In the hour of battle the priests took their favourite image from its column and carried it to the field. It was probably made of wood.

more properly the pillar of Arminius, raised to commemorate the battle between Arminius and Varus, when Germany was for a time freed from the Roman yoke (A.D. 10). In this temple human sacrifices had long been offered by the Saxons, and the idol here thus worshipped—a statue of the ancient warrior—was regarded as the great protecting deity of the whole people.

10. On this occasion and on others, the Saxons could make but little resistance to the forces of Charlemagne. But at length there arose among them a chieftain named Witikind, who was possessed of all the requisites for a general, great personal courage, and great powers of exertion, added to a talent for command—with much natural eloquence. As early as the year A.D. 777, the talents of Witikind became remarkable, though his first endeavours to rouse his countrymen were unsuccessful, and he was constrained to take refuge in Denmark. But issuing from his retreat after an interval of a few years, he compelled the Saxons to raise the standard of war, which, under his command, began to assume a much fiercer aspect than it had yet maintained against the Franks. A great conflict took place at Sinthal, near the banks of the Weser, where the two armies met. The general of Charlemagne, Theodoric, his relation and friend, sustained here a signal discomfiture (A.D. 782). His army, owing to the treacherous conduct of their chiefs, who had acted contrary to the orders of Theodoric, were thrown into disorder, and at last routed with great slaughter. It was a massacre as well as a defeat. Besides the generals, four-and-twenty of the noblest warriors of the Franks were left dead upon the field of battle. But this dishonour was speedily avenged. Charlemagne at the head of a large force hastened to the scene of the revolt, and the victorious army of his enemies melted away like a morning mist before the sun. Witikind also fled, and the Saxon nation were seen flocking again to the monarch, with all the excuses on their tongues that terror or cunning could suggest (A.D. 783).

It was on this occasion that the character of Charlemagne received a stain that no heroism or virtue could wash away. Indignant at the baseness of a people who had so often deceived him, he determined to give them a terrible example of his anger; one that might, as he supposed, ever

afterwards keep them in fear of revolting. He demanded that those who had taken an active part in the insurrection should be given up for punishment; and meeting with no opposition to his vengeance, four thousand and five hundred of the criminals were executed in one day.

11. Many more great battles were, however, still to be fought with these restless and inveterate foes under the generalship of Witikind. The total subjugation of Saxony was a slow and gradual process, for Charlemagne does not appear to have pursued his wars against them for the sake of glory, or for the mere pride of victory, but rather with a view to his own self-defence. But he found himself compelled to take progressive measures against his savage neighbours, which were, however, executed often with reluctance, and which might have been much more severe, if they had not been regulated by a principle of forbearance. Nothing remained for them at length but to profess entire submission to the conqueror, who therefore enacted a variety of laws for his rebellious subjects. Among the rest, baptism was made a compulsory rite, which they could not refuse: they were thus forcibly taught to hear the doctrines of the Christian faith, and comply with its acustomed forms. Their custom of offering human sacrifices was prohibited, under a penalty of death, which was also denounced against those who abandoned or insulted the Christian religion. In thus acting upon a principle somewhat similar to that of the Mahometan apostolate of the sword, Charlemagne may perhaps be justly condemned. But such a principle was not inconsistent with the notions entertained generally in that age. The grand design of Charlemagne evidently was, by such measures, to introduce among these fierce tribes the mild and humanizing tenets of the Christian faith, well knowing that until this was accomplished in some degree, every effort effectually to govern them would be in vain. Without being therefore scrupulous as to the means of accomplishing his object, he was satisfied with believing that he thus conferred a benefit upon those who had forfeited all right to the exercise of their own religion, and which was one of much cruelty and bloodshed. Under such conditions only, he received them to his favour, and their country was thus formally admitted within the pale of his empire; and bishoprics and abbacies were founded with great temporal

possessions, that long continued to influence the condition of Germany.

12. These measures for the improvement of the Saxons, were not attended with all the expected advantages at once, and several years elapsed before the Saxons became, by the conversion of some of their principal leaders, disposed in good earnest, to receive the religion of the conqueror. Having had experience how little the fidelity of this people could be secured by fear, or by severe compulsory laws, Charlemagne now attempted another method. He endeavoured to win the hearts of the chiefs by kindness, inviting them to his court, giving them a promise of safety, if they would rely on his protection, and assuring them that they should thus have an opportunity of comparing the religion as well as general state of the Franks, with that of their own nation. The result of this overture was quite successful, and, shortly afterwards, Charlemagne received his two great antagonists Witikind and Albion, in the most friendly manner at Attigny, on the river Aine, where he had a palace (A.D. 785). The Saxon heroes were not only softened by this act of clemency, but were persuaded to embrace the religion of the conqueror, and both submitted to the rite of Baptism, Charlemagne himself standing as sponsor for those who had been his worst enemies. A beautiful example of Christian forgiveness was thus presented to the world by one of its greatest monarchs, and the effects were speedily seen in the ready conversion of the whole of Saxony to the Christian faith. Those who had been driven away by the inroads of the Saxons, now returned again with confidence to their homes and their altars; the churches were rebuilt, and a general thanksgiving was ordered for this extraordinary conversion of a whole nation to a faith which they had before despised, and persecuted.

13. This state of things, promising as it appeared to be, was but of short duration. Nothing could effectually bend the head of the Saxons to the yoke, or subdue within them that unconquerable love of liberty, which has ever been one of the most remarkable propensities of their race. Though no new chieftain, like Witikind, sprung up to animate their efforts, and lead them to the field of battle, they still continued to carry on a long and desolating war with the Franks. Charlemagne, therefore, at last determined upon the only

expedient in which any hope lay—that of ridding himself of these troublesome neighbours. In the year 804 he entered Saxony with his whole force, and sweeping both banks of the Elbe, carried away all their inhabitants, transporting them either to France, or to the provinces of Flanders and Brabant. By thus removing the most turbulent tribes to a distance from their country, the whole of Saxony was effectually tranquillized, during the rest of the life of Charlemagne. The country which they vacated was bestowed upon the friendly tribe of the Abodrites, who had distinguished themselves as good allies and soldiers against the Saxons, and had bravely defended themselves in an attack that had been made upon them by the Normans.

14. Next in importance to his wars in Saxony, was that which our hero conducted in Spain. At this time, Spain, with the exception of a few of its remote districts, was under the sway of the Arabs, who had possessed themselves of nearly the whole of this country since the year 714. The Mahometan conquerors, passing over from Mauritania and subduing the barbarians who, under Theodoric, had taken possession of this kingdom (A.D. 458), were now in undisturbed enjoyment of the territories which they had wrested from the Visigoths. But in the heart of the Asturias there was still left unsubdued a remnant of the Gothic race, whose souls were still as free and bold as their ancestors, though they were weak in numbers. It was at the instance of one of the Emirs of Arragon, that Charlemagne undertook the work of freeing this territory from the monarchs of Cordova; and, either led on by ambition or by Christian zeal, he crossed the Pyrenees with a large army, and advanced towards Saragossa. Another body of his forces passed the mountains of Rousillon, and made themselves masters of Catalonia, and, taking possession of Barcelona and other neighbouring towns, they advanced across the country to meet and rejoin their monarch.

15. During this march the Franks, being nearly unopposed, easily reduced to submission the provinces of Navarre and Arragon. At Pampeluna they met with some resistance, but a medal was at length struck to commemorate its capture, and its walls were razed to the ground. Near Saragossa a battle was fought (A.D. 778), which lasted several hours; many thousands of Mahometans were slain,

and the whole of the Spanish kingdom of the Arabs would probably have fallen into the hands of this resistless conqueror, had he not been compelled to return, by fresh dangers that were threatening his provinces on the Rhine. In his retreat, a calamity overtook one part of his army that more than eclipsed the glory of his previous enterprise. A portion of his forces, that formed the rear guard, being encumbered with their baggage, were left to follow at a slower pace than the general, who hurried on towards the Rhine. When this division was left at a considerable distance behind him, and had arrived at a pass in the valley of Roncesvalles, the perfidious Gascons coming out from their places of ambush, amidst woods and overhanging precipices, made a murderous attack upon them, for which they were entirely unprepared, and which they had no power to resist. The whole body were driven to the bottom of the pass, where they had no chance of escape, being at once assailed by arrows from above, or by rocks rolled down upon their heads. Rolando at the head of his little army exerted himself for awhile with prodigious valour, but to no purpose, for he at length fell, with nearly all his companions. Upon this incident, Ariosto has raised the structure of a poem, bearing the name of Roland or Orlando, which perpetuates the memory of this event. Many legendary tales are told relating to it, and it is still preserved among the local traditions with a variety of particulars, serving to shew that the struggle must have been one of a nature never to be forgotten. To a flower growing in this part of the Pyrenees has been given the name of the Casque de Roland, from its resemblance to a coat of armour, and the Breche de Roland is a phrase still applied to a remarkable fissure on the crest of one of the rocks in this locality (A.D. 778).

16. At this time Charlemagne was too much occupied at a distance to seek for immediate vengeance; but as soon as he had completed his conquest of the Saxons, he seized the perfidious Duke of the Gascons, and he was put to death, as he deserved, for this act of treachery. The war, however, which had been carried into Spain, was not yet terminated. Barcelona was subsequently retaken by the Saracens (A.D. 797), and a new expedition was commenced against them by Louis, son of Charlemagne, who was at this time

King of Aquitaine, having arrived at his twentieth year. Although this youthful hero wanted the vigour of his father, he obtained a measure of the same success, and at length (A.D. 801) Barcelona was again taken possession of by the Franks. The defensive frontier of France on the side of Spain was restored, and strong fortresses were erected in those passes of the Pyrenees where danger was most to be feared from Saracen invasion. Some of these are said still to exist, or at least their remains are pointed out to travellers even in the present day.

17. The conquest of Lombardy was obtained at a somewhat earlier period in the life of Charlemagne, and was one of his most brilliant exploits. It was also attended by results which have been more lasting than any other of his deeds. To this war he was provoked more by the conduct of Desiderius, the successor of Astolphus, than by ambition. The sovereign of Lombardy had a mortal hatred to Charlemagne, founded justly, perhaps, on the circumstance, that Charlemagne had divorced his sister, and thus dishonoured his race. Finding that Adrian would not lend himself to his scheme of advancing the sons of Carloman, to their deceased father's rights, he placed them at the head of a hostile party, and became the open enemy of the Pope. After seizing the territory of the Exarchate, he threatened to march upon Rome. Although Adrian defended the city for a time, and roused the dormant energies of the citizens to a determination to defend their liberties, his only hope lay in the assistance of the son of that Pepin, who had before saved the patrimony of the church from the hand of the invader. Charlemagne did not, however, appear in haste to come to the rescue of the Roman pontiff. Although the Pope's messenger strongly urged him to do so, on the ground that he had been consecrated with the holy unction, by Pope Stephen as the Roman Patrician, and was therefore the legitimate guardian and defender of the Roman people, yet Charlemagne was first desirous to try if milder means than the sword might not divert Desiderius from his hostile purpose. With this view he sent envoys to him offering him a large sum of gold, if he would restore the cities which he had taken from the Pope. But finding all overtures for peace met only by arrogant refusals, he at length determined

to decide the quarrel by force of arms, and proceeded towards Lombardy at the head of his army.

18. For this purpose, it was necessary to cross the Alps, and to divide his forces into two parts. One of these was led by himself over Mount Cenis; the other, under the command of his uncle, Duke Bernard, took the passage across the mountain then known as Mons Jovis, from a temple erected on one of its acclivities to Jupiter, a name which has since given way to the fame of a more real hero, and to a building more deserving of remembrance, the convent of the great St. Bernard. This march of a large army over mountains of ice and snow, and through those precipitous passes which render the Alpine regions always so terrible, was itself a triumph, as great, if not greater than that first achieved by Hannibal, and in a later age by the French emperor Napoleon. Considering the age in which Charlemagne lived as a more barbarous one than that of either of those two generals, this victory of his over the obstacles of nature was, perhaps, still more wonderful than theirs. When he arrived at the descent of Mount Cenis, he found the whole passage completely blocked up by stockades, which the Lombards were defending with skill and valour. But while he almost despaired of forcing his way through an obstruction of this kind, his enemies began suddenly to retire. Desiderius, though he had at first courageously met and attacked the invaders, had not anticipated a stratagem which he discovered that his bold and skilful enemies were now putting in practice. A messenger from the Pope, Martin the Deacon, was the instrument, who unexpectedly rescued Charlemagne from his embarrassment, by leading some of his best troops by a side pass, whence they fell on the undefended rear of the Lombards. An easy victory was thus secured (A.D. 773); for Desiderius, soon perceiving that his retreat was likely to be cut off by this stratagem, fled with his whole force towards Pavia, his capital, leaving the country thus open to the invaders. Both divisions of the army at length effected their junction in the valley of Aosta. Verona soon fell beneath the attack of the conqueror. Pavia offered a more determined resistance. But all the other cities of the Lombard kingdom had one by one surrendered themselves to detached

bodies of the Franks. Relying, therefore, upon the conquest of this eventually, Charlemagne hastened to Rome, leaving his officers to continue the siege.

19. Accompanied by a large body of his army, and an immense train of bishops, priests, and nobles, he advanced by a rapid march towards the imperial city. At thirty miles distance, the population of all ranks poured forth in joyful procession, to meet and welcome the conqueror. Ensigns, and banners, and branches of the palm and olive, were carried before him, and the standard of the Cross, with which it had been customary to meet the Exarchs on their visit to the city. Since the days of her ancient splendour Rome had never beheld at her gates so magnificent a spectacle (A.D. 774).

The dignity of the monarch and the conqueror was worthy of the scene, and Rome had seldom beheld a nobler prince, or one who came with more sincere intentions of befriending her. He was a giant in stature as in mind, but all his motions were full of grace, and his countenance was no less striking than his figure. His forehead was high and broad—his eye keen and flashing, and the expression of his features at once indicated a powerful mind, and a benevolent heart.

In general, the dress of Charlemagne was remarkable for its simplicity, but on such an occasion as this, he deemed it necessary to appear in all the splendour of royalty, and the robes he now wore were of the richest kind, being wrought of purple and gold. His brow was also adorned with a circle of jewels, and his sandals glittered with precious stones. As soon as he entered the church of St. Peter, he was met by Pope Adrian, attended by all the clergy in their gorgeous vestments. The Pontiff embraced his deliverer with the warmest gratitude and affection; and on all sides arose the voice of a multitude shouting forth the anthem, "Blessed be he who cometh in the name of the Lord."

20. After the arrival of Charlemagne at Rome, he remained there till the solemnities of Easter were over, and was crowned with the diadem of the Patricians or Exarchs, in acknowledgment of his right to that dignity which his father had first enjoyed, and which, it appears, he had never relinquished to the Pope so entirely that he might not, in

form at least, resume it. On this occasion, he only took this honour to confer it upon the Roman Pontiff with a deeper obligation; for there is every reason to believe that Charlemagne granted even a larger and more liberal exercise of territorial power to the Pope, than Pepin had done. From this period, all the rights of the Exarchate have been regarded as virtually belonging to the head of the Roman church. It does not, indeed, appear that there was ever a formal conveyance of this authority. But the king of the Franks probably regarded the bishop of Rome as his vicar, and silently aquiesced in a privilege that had been claimed at an earlier period. He also revered Pope Adrian as a prelate, and loved him as a man, and was therefore ready to yield him the title of Exarch, with the temporal as well as spiritual jurisdiction over some provinces and cities which he had not before claimed. But whatever might be the extent or tenure of this gift, it is certain that from the period of Charlemagne's visit to Rome (A.D. 774), the bishops of that city were invested with a temporal power and dignity, which led to their becoming thenceforth independent and temporal sovereigns. Satisfied with the assertion of his authority, and with the honours he had received at Rome, Charlemagne presently hastened away to the place where his presence was necessary in carrying on the siege of Pavia—the largest and most difficult which the Franks had ever engaged in. At length, after a period of fifteen months, during which the besieged had experienced many miseries, they threw open their gates (A.D. 775), and Desiderius with his wife and daughter were delivered up by the Lombards, without any stipulation on their behalf. The magnanimity of the conqueror was seen on this occasion. No cruelty or plunder was permitted. The institutions of the country were left unchanged, and the monarch of the Franks desired to appear more in the character of a father than of a conqueror. As for the dethroned sovereign and his family, their lives were spared, and they were only required to spend the rest of their existence in retirement from the world. The wife and daughter of Desiderius were sent to a convent in France, and he himself appears to have ended his days in the monastery of Corbie. From this time, Charlemagne took the title of king of Lombardy, and was crowned with the iron

circlet, peculiar to the monarchs of that country from the time of their first settlement in Italy, which took place about the middle of the sixth century.

21. A more distinguished honour than that of being styled king of Lombardy was yet in reserve for Charlemagne. About five years afterwards, his presence was required at Rome, to sit as a sovereign and a judge upon Pope Leo the Third, who had been accused by some of his enemies of great crimes, and who now submitted himself to be judged by a synod of the higher clergy of Rome. The royal friend and vindicator of the rights of the church, taking his seat as president of the assembly, used the authority which he knew he possessed, and only thought of deciding justly without regard to consequences. The individual impeached was apparently innocent. But he was subjected to strong suspicions. On a festal day, two of his rivals for the papacy, Campulus and Paschal, had attacked him with an armed band, as he was leading on a procession of the clergy through the streets of Rome. Taking advantage of the panic, which put to flight all the attendants of the Pope, they endeavoured to effect their object, which was to put out his eyes, and cut off his tongue. From some cause, however, which history does not sufficiently explain, their object was defeated. The pontiff soon recovered from his wounds, and in order to justify what could not be concealed, his daring adversaries now resorted to the expedient of imputing atrocious crimes to him whom they had attempted to mutilate. Such was the occasion on which there was convened at Rome this assembly of the most extraordinary kind. To determine between these contending parties without enquiry, would have been deemed by Charlemagne injustice. He directed, therefore, that the evidence which had been collected should be laid before this tribunal, and that the members of which it was composed should pronounce sentence either in favour of the Pope, or of the two most distinguished personages of their own body.

This, however, these ecclesiastics declined doing, declaring it to be impossible, according to any rules of their order, that they should pass sentence, whether of acquittal or otherwise, upon their general and superior. As no one appeared on the trial to take the part of accuser, and each of the judges declared his private opinion of the Pope's

innocence, Leo himself undertook the decision, by resorting to the practice, then common, of purging himself by oath of the crimes laid to his charge. Mounting the pulpit of St. Peter's, he took the book of the Gospels in his hand, and declared in the most solemn manner his freedom from the guilt imputed to him. The trial was thus terminated in a very satisfactory manner to all but his accusers, whose punishment was reserved for an after period, and whose sacrilegious attempt was at last punished only by an exile to France (A.D. 800).

22. But Charlemagne was to occupy even a more illustrious place in the eyes of the Romans, than that of being a judge of one who was venerated as the common father of Christendom. The pontiff felt himself impelled, by feelings of gratitude, to acknowledge in the strongest manner his obligations; and motives of expediency as well as ambition might have urged him to a course, which was nothing less than an entire renunciation of all the claims of the Eastern empire, by setting up the king of the Franks as Emperor of the West. On Christmas day, in the last year of the eighth century, this great event was accomplished. Charlemagne was in the church of St. Peter, offering his devotions. On this solemnity his dress was more simple than that which he usually wore on festive occasions. Instead of a tunic, embroidered with gold, jewelled sandals, and a diadem shining with precious ornaments, he appeared in the plain costume of the Roman Patrician, or military governor of Rome. The church was filled with the nobility of Italy and France, and at the high altar stood the Roman pontiff. The monarch approaching, knelt on the steps of the altar, and for some moments continued in silent prayer. As he was about to rise, Leo advanced, and raising an imperial crown, he placed it suddenly on the brows of the monarch, while the dome resounded with the acclamations of the people—"Long life and victory to Charles Augustus, crowned by God the great and pacific Emperor of the Romans."

23. Great as was the surprise visible in the monarch's looks, his only alternative was now to refuse the dignity for ever, or to accept it at once. He therefore silently acquiesced in the proceedings of the Pope, when the ceremony had commenced. The pontiff, therefore, proceeded to administer the oath, which confirmed his acceptance of

the title, and then anointed him from head to foot, in the same manner as was practised at the coronation of the Jewish kings, and as Pepin had been anointed before, by Pope Stephen. This ceremony was followed by that of the homage or adoration (as it was termed) according to the forms employed towards the Cæsars. From that hour the titles both of king and of patrician were laid aside, and the monarch of the Franks became the "Imperator Romanorum." Thenceforward his coins were inscribed with his new dignity, and his acts were dated from the years of his empire.

24. About 472 years had now elapsed since Constantine the Great removed the seat of the Roman Empire to Byzantium. During this period his successors had gradually degenerated, and, with the exception of Theodosius and Justinian, there was scarcely an emperor who had been worthy of the name. At the time of the accession of Charlemagne to the dignity of Emperor of the West, the sceptre of the East was in the hands of Irene, the widow of Leo the Fourth, who had married her as a beautiful Athenian girl. With this empress the monarch of France and of Rome proposed a treaty of marriage, his last queen, Luidgarde, having died about two years previously. He sent his ambassadors to Constantinople to conclude this arrangement. Irene had displayed great talents, but ambition was her ruling principle; and to secure the crown to herself, she had not hesitated to deprive her son of his eyesight. Charlemagne was perhaps ignorant of her share in this crime; and only regarded such an alliance as a means of uniting his own empire with that of the East. Irene was compelled to decline this union by the influence of the eunuch Ætius, whose views of raising his brother to the imperial throne would thus have been thwarted. Her ambassador, however, was instructed to treat for an arrangement of the claims of the two empires, and to determine the articles of a future peace. But before this could be concluded, Irene was dethroned by the conspiracy of her great treasurer Nicephorus, who was invested with the purple. The empress of the East, having been banished to the Isle of Lesbos, experienced so great a reverse of fortune, that she was left to earn a scanty subsistance by the labours of her distaff (A.D. 803).

25. The name of this empress is rendered still more remarkable in the history of the eastern empire, for the zealous part she took in restoring the worship of images. Inheriting the hereditary prejudices of the Greek nation, she had, during the life of her husband, concealed her sentiments in some degree; but after the death of Leo, who was a zealous opposer of this idolatry of saints and martyrs, and hence obtained the name of Iconoclast, she assembled a general council to pass a decree on this subject. This council met at Nice (A.D. 787), and is called the seventh general council, and the second of Nice. It decreed the worship of images to be in agreement with Scripture and reason, and with the fathers and councils of the Church. Its acts, which are extant, are a curious monument of superstition and ignorance, of falsehood and folly. Although, by passing this decree, the eastern church reconciled itself with the western, which had more strenuously adhered to the worship of images, and had actually revolted from the authority of Leo the Third and Constantine the Fifth on that account, it would be an error to suppose that Charlemagne had any sympathy with the superstition which then prevailed on this subject. On the contrary we find that, in an assembly held at Frankfort, under his authority (A.D. 794), it was determined that the decrees of the second council of Nice were useless and invalid. After this decision, these decrees were also attacked in a volume, called the "Libri Carolini," which received the sanction of Charlemagne, and were sent together with an epistle to the Roman pontiff.

26. There is reason to believe that the opinions of Alcwin, an English priest, originally of York, exercised much effect on the mind of Charlemagne with reference to this and other subjects pertaining to the concerns of the church. Alcwin was present at this convocation, and was one of the most remarkable scholars of his age. He stood high in favour with the archbishop of York, who sent him on an embassy to Rome. He thus became acquainted with Charlemagne, who was captivated with his eloquence and erudition—so far beyond that of the age in general, and invited him to his court. By his assistance, the Emperor established several libraries in his dominions, and collected a considerable number of books and manuscripts. We are told that, besides his choice private collections, he procured

the writings of the Fathers, amounting to 200 volumes; and that these were bound in a sumptuous manner, and placed in a public building, that those who could not purchase such works might be enabled to enjoy the use of them. At this time, Charlemagne had proposed to send him with presents and tokens of friendship to Offa, King of Mercia; but England was now overrun with the Danes, and no part of it was secure. Alcwin, therefore, who was made Abbot of Tours (A.D. 796) remained there, increasing his literary treasures, and corresponding with his royal master on various subjects. About the year 800, he completed his splendid transcript of the whole Bible, which he presented to the monarch on the day of his last coronation, who preserved it most carefully to the last day of his life *. One of his letters to the Emperor contains the following illustrative passage:—

"Your majesty is not ignorant how earnestly we are exhorted, throughout the Holy Scriptures, to search after wisdom: nothing so tends to the attainment of a happy life. There is nothing more delightful or more powerful in resisting vice, nothing more honourable to an exalted dignity, or more according to philosophy, there is nothing more needful to the just government of a people. Thus Solomon exclaims, 'Wisdom is better than rubies,' &c. Continue, then, my Lord and King, to exhort the young in the palaces of your highness to the earnest pursuit of acquiring wisdom, that they may be honoured in their old age, and ultimately enter into a blessed immortality. I shall truly, according to my ability, continue to sow in those parts the seeds of wisdom among your servants; remembering the command, 'In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand.' In my youth I sowed the seeds of learning in the prosperous seminaries of Britain; and now, in my old age, I am continually doing so in France, praying that the grace of God may bless them in both countries."

After establishing at Tours a school which was the parent of many others, and thus rendering his name famous through-

* This Bible occupied Alcwin twenty-two years, as he commenced it in 778. It is a superb copy of St. Jerome's Latin version. It is now in the British Museum, and was purchased for 750*l*. For further particulars respecting it, see Merewether's Bibliomania of the Middle Ages, pp. 120–121.

out Europe for works of piety and learning, this distinguished scholar died at his own Abbey (A.D. 804).

27. Besides the schools instituted throughout Saxony, Charlemagne, by the advice of Alcwin, founded the universities of Paris and Pavia (A.D. 804). He gave a perpetual endowment to a school at Osnaburgh in Westphalia, where Greek and Latin were to be taught freely to all applicants. He himself had assiduously studied languages, rhetoric, and astronomy, under Alcwin and others. He spoke Latin with the same ease as his own tongue, and had acquired a thorough knowledge of Greek. By his direction, a great change was made in writing. The rude characters in use under the Merovingian race, were now laid aside, and small Roman letters were introduced in their stead. About this time also, it became the fashion to write in large Roman capitals the initial letters of certain chapters or paragraphs, these letters being highly ornamented and painted. Various specimens of this kind of writing are preserved to the present time, in the British Museum, and in other great libraries.

28. The age of Charlemagne was one in which all kinds of learning received a fresh stimulus, by the example of the Emperor himself. And, not content with bestowing on his children a careful and judicious education, suited to the mind and body, he also laboured to excite the various prelates and teachers of the realm to a sense of their duty, by different methods; and sometimes he proposed written questions for their solution, forcing them to exercise their talents, and cultivate their minds by the fear of shame or ridicule. At other times, he bestowed rewards on those who distinguished themselves by their literary merits. By all these methods he laboured to civilize his subjects. He also took efficient measures to repress superstition, and to spread a better knowledge of the doctrines and duties of the Christian religion. For this purpose a book of Homilies was written at his command by Paul the Deacon—a famous Lombard historian; and these were ordered to be read in all the churches. A general council (A.D. 788) was also held at Aix-la-Chapelle for the purpose of reforming the abuses in the Gallican church. Among the regulations issued on that occasion are some curious ones, highly characteristic of the age. Prohibitions were made against divination, either by opening the

book of the Gospels, and applying the first passage met with as a prophecy, or by any other method. The practice of baptizing bells was also forbidden, as well as the custom prevailing among bishops, abbots or abbesses, of keeping hounds, falcons, and jesters.

29. There are few sovereigns who have exhibited a generosity of mind more noble and exalted than that of Charlemagne, either in the means taken for the improvement of his subjects, or when the chances of war might have enriched him with such spoils as monarchs have usually thought it lawful to call their own. This was strongly exemplified on that occasion when his generals invaded Hungary. Having taken possession of the royal fortress of the Huns called "the Ring,"* they found there an immense mass of wealth, which the Avars had accumulated by plundering the empire of the East, and the surrounding nations. All this great hoard of centuries of prosperity being brought to France, and laid at the feet of Charlemagne, that monarch, after selecting some of the most splendid objects for offerings to the church, distributed the rest of the enormous prize amongst his nobles and soldiers, so that the whole nation of the Franks which was before poor, now became extremely rich (A.D. 791).

30. One of the grandest undertakings of this munificent sovereign was the building of a palace at Aix-la-Chapelle (A.D. 796), which is believed to have been the most magnificent structure which Europe had beheld since the days of ancient Rome. Besides immense halls and galleries suited to royal purposes, it contained also a college and a library; baths where a hundred persons could swim at large; a theatre, and a cathedral. Its walls displayed the finest marbles; its

* Some account of this extraordinary fortress may here be added. It is said to have consisted of nine circles of double palisades, formed of the trunks of trees twenty feet in height. The space between these, consisting of twenty feet was filled with stone and compact lime, and the upper part of the whole was covered with earth and planted with living shrubs. At the distance of twenty miles there was a second circle of the same kind, and thus the country presented fortress after fortress, from the outer palisade to the smaller inner circle, or "Ring." The space between these circles was thronged with towns and villages, and the means of getting in or out from these several circles, was by very narrow sally-ports in various parts of the palisades. Such a work must have been almost as great as the building of the wall of China, and is scarcely credible.

gates and towers were of wrought brass; its columns came from Rome, and some of its pavements from the exarchal palace of Ravenna. One particular respecting it must not be forgotten. It was intended to minister not merely to luxury, but to humanity. Adjoining it were particular halls, continually kept open, where all classes and conditions might find a refuge from the cold of night, or from the storms of winter.

31. The court of Charles the Great was not only the refuge of the unfortunate, but, after a brilliant reign of thirty years, it became the resort of ambassadors from all nations. Envoys were sent from Alphonso, the Gothic king of Spain (A.D. 797), bearing rich presents, consisting of spoils taken from the Saracens, and expressing the wishes of their monarch to be called a faithful vassal of the French king. There was also a still more extraordinary embassy which visited him from the Caliph of Bagdat, Haroun Al Raschid, a name so frequently met with in the stories of the "Arabian Nights." The ears of the Caliph had been filled with the fame of the sovereign of the Franks. He despised the Greeks and their Emperor, levying annually upon them a tribute of seventy thousand dinars of gold; but for the monarch who had won the sceptre of all Europe by his invincible arms, he felt the warmest admiration. This feeling was a reciprocal one on the part of Charlemagne, who respected virtue, magnanimity, and talent, even in a Mahometan Prince. An interchange of presents, and of tokens of mutual regard, thus took place (A.D. 797–800), which led at length to some important advantages to the Christian subjects of the Caliph at Jerusalem. At the instance of the Patriarch of the holy city, the monarch of the Franks became an intercessor for its persecuted inhabitants; the Saracens, who had taken possession of it (A.D. 637), having oppressed them by a heavy capitation tax, and other hardships. Besides thus interceding on their behalf, Charlemagne sent a great number of presents to the shrine of the Holy Sepulchre, with alms for the support of pilgrims. In reply to his embassy on behalf of the afflicted, the friendship of Haroun manifested itself at once in the strongest manner. He sent back the priests whom Charlemagne had commissioned to bear his message, with the keys of the holy places, together with a standard, as the mark of the sovereignty that was conceded to him in Jeru-

salem (A.D. 801). From that time forward, during the whole reign of Haroun Al Raschid, the inhabitants of Jerusalem seemed to live more under the dominion of Charles, than under that of their original sovereign. The power with which the Caliph entrusted him he exercised entirely for the benefit of pilgrims to the holy shrine, and for the consolation of the Christian inhabitants of the city. They were also indebted to him for a monastery, a hospital, and a library, which continued for many ages to be monuments of his generosity. No interruption took place to the friendly feelings with which the great sovereigns of the East and West thus regarded each other. Although a period of more than three years was consumed by the ambassadors of these princes in going from one capital to the other and returning, this did not stop the interchange of mutual tokens of friendship. Among the other oriental presents sent by the Caliph, consisting of precious ointments, perfumes, robes of silk, and a tent of beautiful and ingenious construction, to testify his undiminished regard, was one of a still more curious kind, which deserves to be mentioned, as it shows the progress of the ornamental and useful arts at this time in the East. It consisted of a clock of gilded bronze, round the dial of which the twelve hours were marked. At the end of each hour the number of brazen balls, which were required to mark the changes, were thrown out from above, and, falling one after the other on a cymbal below, struck the time. In like manner a requisite number of horsemen issued forth from windows placed around the dial.

32. It may serve to account in some measure, for the honour thus paid to a distant monarch, by one of the powerful successors of Mahomet, if we here give a list of the wars in which he was from time to time engaged; and take a general survey of the extent of his dominions, towards the close of his life. His fifty-three campaigns may, for the sake of brevity, be arranged as in the following catalogue:—

1 against the Aquitanians.
18 against the Saxons.
5 against the Lombards.
7 against the Arabs in Spain.
1 against the Thuringians.
2 against the Avars.
4 against the Bretons.
1 against the Bavarians.
4 against the Sclavonians beyond the Elbe.
5 against the Saracens in Italy.
3 against the Danes.
2 against the Greeks.

It will thus be seen that there was scarcely a nation in Europe with whom he had not been more or less engaged in military conflict; and always with a degree of success that shewed his skill as a warrior, and the extent of his resources as a monarch. One territory after another was thus gradually added to his dominions, till at length they became as extensive as the proudest ambition could well desire, or the mightiest genius could pretend to govern. The whole of France and Belgium, with their natural boundaries—the Alps, the Pyrenees, the Ocean, the Mediterranean, and the Rhine—formed but a small part of his kingdom. For, in the south of Europe, he possessed all that part of Spain comprised between the Ebro and the Pyrenees, and in the North, the whole of Germany to the banks of the Elbe. Italy, as far as the lower Calabria, was tributary to his crown; and, in addition to Hungary and Bohemia, which he had conquered, the whole of Dalmatia, Croatia, Liburnia, and Istria (with the exception of the maritime cities *), were conceded to him by the rulers of the Greek Empire, as well as Sardinia, Corsica, and the Balearic Isles. The east of Europe also acknowledged the sway of the Frankish monarch, as far as the conflux of the Danube with the Teyss and the Save; and most of the Sclavonian tribes, between the Elbe and the Vistula, paid him tribute and professed obedience to his authority.

33. Such were his dominions (A.D. 810). But Charlemagne was now advanced to a period of life in which he could not but anticipate that he should be compelled, by a power more invincible than his own, to resign this vast kingdom to others. He had seen many of his friends and children already called away before him; and he had to mourn the immoral conduct of his daughters, notwithstanding he had taken great pains in their education, and guarded them with anxious care. He must also have reflected, that his own example had been, in one respect at least, a licentious one; and that a want of chastity was among those sins for which he might justly reproach himself, and the effects of which were likely to be felt in the fate of his family, and of the empire, and much more hereafter than they had been even during his lifetime. An anecdote

* The principal of these was Venice, which, after being subjugated by Charlemagne, was formally ceded to the Eastern Emperor, Nicephorus.

illustrative of the state of his mind at this period may here be given. "During his journey round the shores of the German Sea, Charlemagne is said to have arrived at one of the ports at the moment that the Norman pirates appeared. The invaders, however, learning the presence of the monarch, set all their sails, and bore away; but Charlemagne remained gazing upon their departing vessels, while the tears were seen to roll down over his cheeks. 'I weep not, my friends,' said he, turning to the nobles, who looked on in surprise, 'because I fear myself those miserable savages; but I weep that they should dare to show themselves upon my coast while I am living, for I foresee the evils they will bring upon my people when I am dead.'" * (A.D. 800.)

34. Such reflections in his declining years must have tended strongly to affect a mind like that possessed by Charlemagne, which was naturally endowed with warm affections, and far from ignorant of the requirements of Christian duty. We cannot wonder, therefore, that he formed a resolution to associate the heir of his principal dominions in the exercise of this sovereignty during his life-time, in order to guard against the intrigues of faction, or the efforts of ambition, after his death. Of the Emperor's three legitimate sons there now remained only Louis, king of Aquitaine. Upon him he proposed to bestow the crown of France and Germany after his decease, leaving to his grandson Bernard the government of Italy. Having obtained the consent of his nobles to this arrangement, he determined that Louis should be solemnly crowned in his presence in the church at Aix-la-Chapelle. On the day appointed for this ceremony, the father and son appeared there, and, kneeling before the high altar of the church, implored the divine benediction. At length the Emperor arose and addressed his son with much power and eloquence, in a speech which enjoined him above all things to love and fear God, and to follow his laws, to govern and protect the church and the clergy, to be the friend of the poor, to choose for his ministers those who might be most likely to do justice to all, and to preserve a character that might be without reproach in the sight of God, and of his people. He then demanded of

* This anticipation was prophetic. "The destructive progress of the Normans, in less than seventy years, precipitated the fall of his race and monarchy."

Louis, if he were willing to follow these precepts, and upon receiving his reply in the affirmative, he directed him to take the crown which had been laid purposely on the altar, and to place it on his own head, as a gift which he held from God, his father, and the nation. Louis having thus been solemnly crowned, the ceremony was concluded with the usual morning service of the day (A.D. 813).

35. Such a ceremony could not but impress the minds of the people with a dread that their beloved monarch's career was drawing to a close. Many sinister omens also conspired, about this time, to confirm the fears of a superstitious people. The burning of the bridge at Mayence, the descent of the lightning on the church of Aix-la-Chapelle, the appearance of an unusually large meteor, the falling of the Emperor's horse, the bursting of his sword-belt, the appearance of a spot in the sun, and the frequent eclipses of that luminary and the moon, were all looked upon as prodigies which foretold evil to a monarch, whose worst augury, however, was his having ended his seventieth year. Many of these events were pointed out to Charlemagne himself, but he had either the good sense to despise such prognostications, or prudently concealed his credulity.

36. He had now, however, more leisure to devote to preparation for the interminable future, than any previous portion of his life afforded him; and it may readily be believed that he, whose constant practice it was to husband time in the most careful manner, did not in his latter days neglect these precious moments. Such had been the habits of his life, that he was accustomed to devote even a large portion of those hours which are usually wasted in sleep, to the regulation of the affairs of his kingdom. He was habituated (we are told) to the practice of rising from his bed four or five times in the course of a night; and while he was dressing, he heard the reports of the count of the palace, and decided upon causes which were brought before him with as much wisdom as if listening to them on the judgment seat. During his repasts he caused various works to be read to him. The subjects of these generally were the history of past times, and works upon theology, amongst which the writings of St. Augustine are said to have afforded him the greatest pleasure.

37. The malady which at last terminated his life was a

pleurisy. Till within a short period of his death he had still followed the chase, an amusement in which he had always delighted; and, notwithstanding some degree of lameness and bodily infirmity, he still continued to enjoy the luxury of swimming in the warm and capacious baths which he had erected at Aix-la-Chapelle. A few days of illness, in which he persevered to taste nothing but water, proved fatal to this great monarch, and he expired on the 28th of January, A.D. 814, in the seventy-second year of his age, and the forty-seventh of his reign.

He was buried in a vault beneath the great church which he had built. It is related also that he was interred in his imperial robes; that the pilgrim's wallet which he carried in his journeys to Rome, was deposited with his body; that by the side of it was placed his long and heavy sword; and that upon his breast was laid the book of the Gospels which he continually used. Yet time, which annihilates all distinctions, and shows their nothingness and vanity, invaded the tomb of the dead hero, though it is said to have been sealed up with peculiar care. In 1847 his bones were discovered at Aix-la-Chapelle, in an old chest, that lay abandoned in a dark closet adjoining the sacristy, having been exhumed by Frederic Barbarossa (A.D. 1165), who took up the bones of the monarch after his canonization by Paschal the Third. Frederic (so the story runs) kept these mortal spoils in a chest; but the vestments and insignia of the Emperor became the coronation robes and insignia of the Franco-Roman Empire; and after Francis the Second (A.D. 1792) had invested himself with them as king and emperor elect, they were conveyed to Vienna, where they still remain.

38. It is melancholy to contemplate the fallen greatness of such a mighty sovereign as Charlemagne, in these traditions. But still more melancholy is the record of the family, and of the empire which he raised to so exalted a pitch of grandeur. The Carlovingian race and their splendid inheritance was of a shorter duration than usually falls to the lot of the descendants even of ordinary monarchs. The following summary from Gibbon will suffice to convey a general idea of the sequel of the history of this great hero and his empire.

"The pious Lewis survived his brothers, and embraced

the whole empire of Charlemagne; but the nations and the nobles, his bishops, and his children, quickly discerned that this mighty mass was no longer inspired by the same soul; and the foundations were undermined to the centre, while the external surface was yet fair and entire. After a war or a battle, which consumed one hundred thousand Franks, the empire was divided by a treaty between his three sons, who had violated every filial and fraternal duty. The kingdoms of Germany and France were for ever separated: the provinces of Gaul, between the Rhone and the Alps, the Meuse, and the Rhine, were assigned with Italy to the imperial dignity of Lothaire. In the partition of his share, Lorraine and Arles, two recent and transitory kingdoms, were bestowed on the younger children; and Lewis the Second, his eldest son, was content with the realm of Italy, the proper and sufficient patrimony of a Roman emperor. On his death, without any male issue, the vacant throne was disputed by his uncles and cousins, and the popes most dexterously seized the occasion of judging the claims and merits of the candidates, and of bestowing on the most obsequious, or most liberal, the imperial office of advocate of the Roman church. The dregs of the Carlovingian race no longer exhibited any symptoms of virtue or power, and the ridiculous epithets of the *bald*, the *stammerer*, the *fat*, and the *simple*, distinguished the tame and uniform features of a crowd of kings alike deserving of oblivion. By the failure of the collateral branches, the whole inheritance devolved to Charles the Fat, the last emperor of his family: his insanity authorized the desertion of Germany, Italy, and France; he was deposed in a Diet, and solicited his daily bread from the rebels by whose contempt his life and liberty had been spared. According to the measure of their force, the governors, the bishops, and the lords, usurped the fragments of the falling empire; and some preference was shown to the female or illegitimate blood of Charlemagne. Of the greater part, the title and possession were alike doubtful, and their merit was adequate to the contracted scale of their dominions." *

* Gibbon, c. 49.

SUMMARY OF ERA THE TENTH.

1. The name and character of Charlemagne.—2. The nation of the Franks; their early history.—3. The subject continued.—4. The rise of Pepin d'Heristal; of Charles Martel.—5. Pepin the Short deposes Childeric and becomes king; Charlemagne is sent on an embassy to Pope Stephen. —6. Pepin defends the cause of the Pope against the King of Lombardy; is crowned with his sons by the Roman Pontiff.—7. Astolphus is conquered; the Exarchate yielded up and granted to the Pope.—8. Charlemagne as a soldier; succeeds to the crown; acquires by his brother's death the whole empire of the Franks; his enemies.—9. His early wars with the Saxons.—10. Witikind their general; the Franks sustain a defeat; again conquer; the Saxons suffer a cruel massacre.—11. Their subjugation; are compelled to receive baptism, and to renounce their religion; Charlemagne's policy in this measure.—12. His conciliatory overtures; Witikind and Albion are baptized; the Saxons brought generally to receive Christianity.—13. They again cast off the yoke; final and effectual measures taken by their expatriation.—14. Charlemagne's wars in Spain.—15. Reduces Navarre and Arragon; the calamity of part of his army on their return through the pass of Roncesvalles.— 16. Subsequent wars and operations in Spain.—17. Causes of the war with Lombardy.—18. Charlemagne's passage over the Alps; his difficulties; his victory; the siege of Pavia.—19. His march to Rome; received as Exarch; his fine person; splendid dress; welcomed as a deliverer.— 20. He is crowned as Exarch and renews the grant of Pepin; Pavia surrenders; Charlemagne receives the crown of Lombardy; Desiderius and his family; their treatment. —21. Charlemagne's subsequent visit to Rome; the trial of Pope Leo; his accusers, &c.; he purges himself from the charges against him.—22. He crowns Charlemagne Emperor of the West, or Imperator Romanorum.—23. The at-

tendant ceremonies.—24. The Emperor's correspondence with Irene, empress of the East; her history.—25. Her conduct in reference to the worship of images; a council held at Frankfort, which condemns this worship.—26. Alcwin's influence in this and other matters; his history; bible-letter, &c.—27. Schools established by the Emperor in various places.—28. The means taken to promote learning and knowledge, and to repress superstition.—29. Charlemagne's generosity to his people; the spoils of the Avars given to the Franks; the Ring.—30. The Emperor builds a palace at Aix-la-Chapelle; its magnificence, &c.—31. He receives embassies from Spain, and from the East; Haroun Al Raschid; his great regard for Charlemagne; sends him the keys, &c., of Jerusalem.—32. List of the wars carried on during the reign of Charlemagne; extent of his dominions.—33. His advanced age and past life; his journey round the shores of the northern ocean; his reflections.—34. He inaugurates Louis his son with the royal dignity; the ceremony on this occasion.—35. Prognostics of his death.—36. The Emperor's habits at this time.—37. His last illness; decease and burial.—38. His descendants; the fortunes of his empire.

ERA THE ELEVENTH.

THE LIFE OF ALFRED THE GREAT.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE ENGLISH MONARCHY; AND THE RISE OF THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

1. ALFRED is the first of our Anglo-Saxon kings whose history can be read with much pleasure or advantage. The early period of our national annals is singularly obscure and uncertain, and what is known of it is chiefly filled up with the scanty details of battles and contentions between the rival tribes, who endeavoured to gain a superiority over each other by war or murder. "This history," says Hume, "abounds in names, but is extremely barren of events," and our great poet Milton observes, that "the skirmishes of kites and crows as much merit a particular narrative, as the confused transactions and battles of the Saxon Heptarchy." It is not until we arrive at the age of Alfred, that we meet with any prince whose life constitutes a very remarkable era in English history.

The nation to which Alfred belonged was one, however, that had long been settled in this country before it gave birth to so great a prince. Its origin may be traced to the northern parts of Germany, and the Cimbrian Chersonesus, a contracted territory, forming the present Duchy of Sleswig, or perhaps of Holstein. Under the reign of Valentinian (A.D. 371) the Saxons attacked the maritime provinces of Gaul; and in order to oppose their inroads the Romans appointed an officer, whom they called Count of the Saxon shore. By degrees they became more formidable, and, from being at first little better than roving pirates, at

last took possession of large tracts of country on the borders of the Rhine. Distinguished always by their valour and love of liberty, the Saxons, Angles, or Jutes (for by all these names they were known) acquired a settlement in this island as early as the year 450. Perceiving, after their easy triumph over the Scots and Picts, to which the Britons had invited them, that they might subdue the Britons themselves with the same facility, they lost no time in effecting and securing their conquest over Vortigern, Vortimer, and Ambrosius successively. The kingdom of Hengist was thus established in Kent, and fixed at Canterbury, where he governed about forty years; dying in or near to the year 488, and leaving his newly-acquired dominions to his posterity.

2. The next of the Saxon kingdoms founded in this country was that of Œlla, another northern adventurer, who at length fixed himself in Sussex and Surrey (A.D. 477). Eighteen years later Cerdic and his son Kenric, with another band of these rovers, gained a footing in the western part of this island, and were therefore called the West Saxons. Several desperate battles were fought with the Britons at this time, who made a more courageous resistance than they had hitherto done to the progress of the invaders. They even called in to their aid, on this occasion, the renowned king Arthur, prince of the Silures, or of South Wales, whose matchless valour stopped the progress of the Saxons for awhile, but could not wrest from them their conquests over the counties of Hants, Dorset, Wilts, Berks, and the Isle of Wight. By successive inroads of the same race from Germany, the natives of Britain were at last overpowered, and driven into the remote fastnesses of Cornwall and Wales; but a remnant escaped to Armorica, and gave their name to what is now a province of France, formerly known as Bretagne, Brittany, or the lesser Britain.

It was thus that, winning their way by slow steps and painful efforts, the Saxons advanced from the north, from the east, and from the south, till at length their victorious banners were united in the centre of the island. A hundred and fifty years after the invasion of Hengist, their conquests were nearly completed by the parcelling out of the greater part of the island into seven kingdoms, which have been called the Saxon Heptarchy. But it was not until the

tenth century that Cornwall was conquered by Athelstan. The kingdoms thus acquired by the Saxons had no stability, and were subject to perpetual changes. Among the seven or eight petty sovereigns who ruled over the island, domestic feuds and jealousies were continually springing up, and their acknowledgment of one who bore the title of Britwalda, as a sort of superior over the rest, was an empty honour, which often gave rise to disputes and wars. These differences were, after more than two centuries and a half of strife, terminated by Egbert, king of Wessex, becoming sufficiently powerful to subdue or control the remaining six or seven chiefs, and to unite the several kingdoms of the Heptarchy or Octarchy under his dominion (A.D. 827).

3. Egbert was the sole descendant of the first Saxon conquerors who subdued Britain; the descendants of all the other royal families having become extinct by war or other causes. He was also a distinguished warrior, having been trained in the school of the greatest monarch and hero of the age, Charlemagne, at whose court he was residing in honourable exile when called home to mount the throne of Wessex. All these circumstances contributed to give him that ascendancy which he at length acquired over the Anglo-Saxon nation. His supremacy was also acknowledged over a portion of Wales and of the low country of Scotland. The government of some of the former kings of the Heptarchy could scarcely be said to have been yet abolished, as they were termed the lesser kings, and acted the part of deputies, or rulers of the provinces. But by this time, or even as early as the year 800, the seven kingdoms had already merged into three; for Kent, Essex, and East Anglia were all swallowed up in Mercia; Northumbria had engrossed to itself Deira and Bernicia; and Wessex united to itself Sussex, with all its dependencies. To some of these states Egbert allowed the privilege of electing a king, who paid him tribute, and was dependant upon him. Thus, after about four hundred years from the first arrival of the Saxons, England became a kingdom, of nearly the same extent as that which is now properly so called; and its customs, laws, and institutions, civil and religious, were with little variation everywhere the same. A union in government laid the first foundation for the future greatness of a people, who readily

paid their allegiance to a monarch commanding general homage, by the splendour of his victories, the vigour of his administration, and the superior nobility of his birth.

4. The Anglo-Saxon kingdom had, long before this time, emerged in some degree from that state of barbarity which belonged to it in the days of Hengist and Horsa. From the year 597, Christianity had been restored in our island by the mission of Augustine the monk, assisted by the zeal of Queen Bertha; and Ethelbert king of Kent had become its first convert. Thirty-seven years after, or A.D. 634, the faith of Christ had made a steady progress throughout our land, and was everywhere subverting idolatry; and thus, long before the Heptarchy, the Anglo-Saxons of the plains, not less than the Britons among the hills (who had always retained their Christianity and its institutions from the days of the Apostles), were become believers in the Gospel. The Pagan religion had, however, deeply imprinted its characters upon their language and customs, and has not become entirely effaced even in the present day. Some deities of the Saxons have their names still kept up among us in the days of the week, and the principal festival of the year. They worshipped the Sun, thence our Sunday; the Moon, thence our Monday; Tuysco, thence our Tuesday; Woden, the Mars of the Romans, thence Wednesday; Thor, the Jupiter of the ancients, thence our Thursday; Frigga, their Venus, hence Friday, and Seater or Saturn, thence our Saturday. Our term Easter was also originally a Saxon goddess, whose festival was kept in April.

5. Under the reign of Egbert, a new prospect was opened of national prosperity; and it might have been expected that a people united under the same form of religion, and under one monarch, would be prosperous and happy. But this prospect was interrupted by the dangers with which the country was threatened from the inroads of foreign enemies, who were now disposed to make the Saxons their prey, just as these had done the Britons before them. Egbert was scarcely beginning to enjoy the reward of his courage and prudence, when the Danes appeared in the Isle of Sheppey. These northern pirates, who assumed the title of Sea-kings, and who lived by violence and plunder, had now fixed their desires upon obtaining possession of this country. As early as the year 787, they had landed a

force in Holy Island, and in 795 they appeared in Northumberland; after which they returned periodically and with increased numbers. As long, however, as Egbert lived, their successes were but trifling, and purchased at a dear rate. A large body of them, who had landed in thirty-five ships, he met and defeated with great slaughter near Charmouth in Dorsetshire (A.D. 833), and a second victory of a still more decisive kind he gained over them at Hengistdown, still called Hengsdon, near the town of Callington in Cornwall (A.D. 835).

6. By keeping a vigilant watch along the coast, and by the energy of his measures, Egbert was enabled during his lifetime to preserve his kingdom from sustaining any very serious injury. But after his death (A.D. 836) his feeble successor Ethelwolf, who displayed more talents for governing a convent than a kingdom, made but feeble efforts to resist the Danes. During this reign, they continued their system of predatory warfare on the coast of England, with various degrees of success, keeping the country in a continual state of alarm, and from the nature of their operations generally deriving some advantage. Their vessels were small, and ran easily up the creeks and rivers where they drew them ashore; and having formed an intrenchment round them which they guarded with part of their number, the remainder scattered themselves everywhere, and carrying off the inhabitants, cattle, and goods, they hastened to their ships and quickly disappeared. Such was their general plan of warfare. But at length they ventured upon the bolder measure of endeavouring to obtain a settlement in the Isles of Thanet and of Sheppey, by taking up their winter quarters in these places; and notwithstanding that they were repulsed and defeated on more than one occasion during this reign, they still maintained their ground, burning the cities of London and Canterbury, and marching into the heart of Surrey (A.D. 853).

7. When the crown devolved, at the death of Ethelwolf, after an inglorious reign, upon Ethelred his third son, A.D. 866 (the two elder brothers having died before him), he found that he had succeeded to a kingdom torn by intestine divisions, and more than ever in danger from the Danes. The Anglo-Saxon monarchy existed only in name. It was in reality broken up into four principalities, breathing a

deadly hatred towards each other, which the fear of the Danes could scarcely induce them to forget, for the more important purpose of revenging themselves upon a common enemy. On this account it was that the Danes soon accomplished their object, of spreading themselves over the whole island. Twenty thousand of them now landed in Northumbria (A.D. 867), and fortified themselves in winter quarters, by the connivance or assistance of the Saxons of East Anglia. In the early spring, they marched to York, and defeating Ella, king of Northumbria, put him to death in cold blood, in the most cruel manner. From thence they carried war and slaughter over large tracts of the more northern counties; and proceeding southward, they fell upon Nottingham and Lincolnshire. Although they were met by Ethelred, on more than one occasion, and defeated or put to route, this did not put a stop to their advances. Each successive month brought over fresh supplies, with which their forces were recruited. East Anglia they so entirely subdued, as to set up there Guthrum, one of their own chiefs, as a sovereign (A.D. 867). At Reading and Aston they were encountered bravely by the King and his brother Alfred, who was now already beginning to give promise of his future talents, as a prince and warrior. But every day these engagements became more frequent and severe. In one of them, said to have been near Merton, Ethelred received a mortal wound, of which he died after a few days, leaving the inheritance of a troubled kingdom to Alfred, who had only then arrived at the twenty-second year of his age.

8. The prince who now succeeded to the Anglo-Saxon throne, and of whose illustrious history we are about to give a more particular description, was the youngest son of Ethelwolf. He was consequently the grandson of Egbert, but was destined to become far more distinguished than his ancestors in the annals of his country. His birth-place was at Vaneathing, now Wantage, in Berkshire (A.D. 849). His mother was Osburga, the daughter of Oslac, an English noble, who was descended from renowned Gothic progenitors. He died when Alfred was very young. Alfred's extraordinary qualities as a child much endeared him to his father, who, when he visited the city of Rome, partly as a pilgrim, and partly to take counsel of the Pope, carried with

him his favourite son, though he was then only six years of age. Either in this visit, or in one of the following year (A.D. 856), Alfred received the papal benison, and was duly anointed by Pope Leo the Third as a king of England. Whether this was done by the request of Ethelwolf himself, does not appear. It has been presumed by some writers, to account for so wonderful a circumstance, either that Ethelwolf had determined upon a division of his kingdom, and wished thus to give a sanction to an act of partiality which he meant to exercise on behalf of his favourite son, or that the Pope, struck with the boy's beautiful countenance and genius, did it from some impulse of his own, perhaps prognosticating Alfred's future greatness, or asserting a right which the Papal see already pretended to, that of conferring kingdoms *.

9. Notwithstanding the early honours thus bestowed upon Alfred, his education was for many years greatly neglected. The Anglo-Saxons had by this time degenerated much from the literary reputation of their ancestors. The Thanes or nobles, dividing their time between war and the chase, despised the pursuits of knowledge, or accounted them as things fitting only for the monk and the cloister. They turned the attention of their children in general to exercises, in which they might harden their frames and excite their courage. It is little, therefore, to be wondered at, that Alfred, though early committed to the care of Swithin†, prior of Winchester, and afterwards Lord Chancellor, should have grown up almost to manhood without learning to read Latin‡. It was to his stepmother Judith, the daughter of Charles the Bald, of France, whom his father had married on his return from Rome, that the young King was indebted

* It is not improbable, that the coronation of Charlemagne by Pope Leo, without his own consent, as Emperor of the Romans, might have suggested the thought of paying a flattering compliment of a similar kind to Ethelwolf, who probably had indicated his partiality for Alfred's claims above those of his brethren.

† The same who appears in our calendar as St. Swithin, whose day is still the subject of popular observation.

‡ This anecdote, as generally told, makes Alfred begin to read in *his own* language. But, as an *illuminated volume* was offered to him by Judith, a foreigner, to tempt him to learn, there can be little doubt that such a volume was written in Latin, or in French, and the former was far more common in books than any other language.

for his first ambition to become a scholar. Alfred, though he had not hitherto been a reader of many books, for there were but few in his own language, had acquired knowledge from various sources; for it was impossible that a mind like his could so long have remained entirely destitute of all cultivation. He took especial pleasure in history, and in listening to the exploits of kings and warriors as sung by the Anglo-Saxon minstrels. Queen Judith had long observed this propensity, and only waited a favourable opportunity to turn it to a more sure and useful result. On a certain occasion she took from her boudoir one of the illuminated volumes which were made by the monks of this period, and translated from it a tale which particularly interested Alfred and his brothers. Seeing the effect it produced, she offered the beautiful volume to whichever of the youths should first learn to read such a book. Alfred immediately put himself under the tuition of a master, and laboured earnestly till he had attained his object. From this period, his ambition to be a scholar was awakened; and, by the time that he was called to the government of the kingdom, he had acquired a considerable degree of that knowledge of books as well as of men, which fitted him hereafter so wisely to govern his subjects, and to promote among them a fresh love of elegant and useful learning.

10. Deeply absorbed as he now was in such pursuits, Alfred regarded his accession to royalty rather as a matter of regret than of triumph. But, being called to the throne in preference to his brother's children, who were mere infants, and by the unanimous voice of the nobles and prelates, as well as by the will of his father, he had no choice left him, for the prayers of the people and the urgency of public affairs made it imperative that he should interrupt for awhile the prosecution of his studies, and fulfil the more appropriate duties of a warrior and a king. Ambition did not lead him to accept the crown, but a stern principle of duty, for the Danes were now threatening the kingdom with universal devastation. Scarcely had he buried his brother, when he was obliged to take the field, in order to oppose them. They had now seized upon Wilton (A.D. 871), and were exercising their usual ravages on the countries around. He marched against them, therefore, with the few troops he could assemble on a sudden, and, giving

them battle, gained at first an advantage, but, by his pursuing the victory too far, he lost it again. Their loss, however, in this action was so great that, fearing Alfred would receive a reinforcement from his subjects, they were content to stipulate for a safe retreat, and promised to leave the kingdom. This promise they did not long keep, and, carrying their arms into Mercia, they compelled Burrhed, the brother-in-law to Alfred, and who bore the title of King of Mercia, to abandon his kingdom (A.D. 874); and it was thus entirely laid waste by spoilers whom, it appeared, no treaties could bind, and no force could resist.

11. For awhile the kingdom of the West Saxons was enabled, by the vigour and abilities of Alfred, to resist the efforts of these ravagers. A part of a new swarm from the Continent having seized upon Wereham, in Dorset, the centre of Alfred's dominions, he so harassed them in this quarter, that they were content to treat with him again, stipulating to depart from the country (A.D. 875). Alfred made them swear by the holy relics,—mistrusting their promise, and supposing that if they violated the oath, their impiety would draw down upon them the vengeance of heaven. But the Danes, little apprehensive of this danger, waited only a favourable opportunity to renew the attack; and presently after fell upon Alfred's army, which was taken by surprise and put to flight. Extending their conquests now more westward, they took possession of Exeter. Alfred, however, collected new forces in so vigorous a manner that, in this one year (A.D. 875), he fought eight battles, and reduced the Danish forces to the extremity of again consenting to leave the kingdom. This they did for a short time, but, new swarms afterwards arriving, they ventured under the guidance of Guthrum to make an attack upon the Saxons during the winter season, when they were least on their guard, and when they were indulging in a mistaken idea of their security. On the 1st of January (A.D. 878), they assembled under the cloud of night, and, pushing on rapidly, entered Chippenham on the left bank of the Avon, soon after darkness set in on the evening of the 6th. Not expecting the enemy at this season, the forces of Alfred were wholly unprepared for the attack; his cavalry were cut to pieces, his infantry dispersed, and his people so thoroughly disheartened at beholding this miserable havoc

made amongst them, after all the strenuous efforts they had made for their defence, that it was impossible to rally their forces. A general panic seized upon them; some left the country and retired into Wales, or fled beyond the sea, and others submitted to the conquerors. Every one regarded the contest as now utterly hopeless, except Alfred himself, who yielded to the entreaties of some of his friends, whose advice he followed rather than his own wishes, in quitting the scene of danger. With true heroism he retired from the field, knowing that by a rash act of resistance he could gain nothing, but that by escaping he might reserve himself and his cause for better times.

12. In the disguise of a peasant, the King of the Anglo-Saxons now sought a shelter from the pursuit and fury of his enemies, in the fastnesses of Somersetshire. For a while he took refuge in the cottage of a labourer, who had been entrusted with the charge of some of his own cows. The story is told, that the wife of this man, being ignorant of the quality of her guest, and observing him one day busy by the fire-side, with his bow and arrows, she desired him to take care of the cakes which were baking, while she was employed elsewhere. But she found on her return that Alfred, whose thoughts were otherwise engaged, had entirely neglected her injunction; upon which she rated him sharply, exclaiming, while she saw her cakes just spoiled, "Look you, man, how the cakes are burning by your carelessness in not turning them; though you are glad enough to eat them when they are properly baked." Little did this poor woman suppose, that the person whom she thus addressed was yet destined to be one of the greatest kings and heroes whose names adorn the page of history.

13. When Alfred found that the search after him had become more remiss, he ventured to withdraw from a place of concealment, where he was of necessity subjected to menial services. His enemies meantime had overrun the counties of Hants, Dorset, Wilts, and Buckingham. But the men of Somerset yet remained unvanquished, and becoming by some means acquainted with the place of the King's retreat, a considerable number of them gradually drew towards him. With this force he chose as a place of security a small island, which was situated in the middle of a morass, formed at a spot where the rivers Thone and Parrett joined their waters.

Here he found about two acres of firm ground, and building an habitation on them, he rendered himself and his retainers more secure by a fortification, and by a bridge thrown across the marsh. He called the place Athelingay or the Isle of Nobles, and it still bears the name of Athelney. The situation possessed many advantages, the roads to it being then unknown, and inaccessible for the most part, by lying in the midst of forests and morasses. Alfred thus found opportunity to issue forth from time to time with his companions, to attack such bodies of the Danes as were most unprepared to receive them. By these frequent sallies upon his enemies, who were ignorant from what quarter the blows came, he was enabled to take some degree of vengeance for his past injuries, and to subsist himself and his devoted followers by the plunder thus acquired. Doubtless, also, from these successes he and they were encouraged to hope for more important victories, that would at length restore their rights, and reward their valour.

14. Alfred continued in this place for more than a twelvemonth, when the news of an important event reached his ears. Hubba the Dane, with a fresh army of his countrymen, after ravaging South Wales, had landed in the north of Devon with twenty-three vessels. Here he laid siege to Kenwith Castle, near the mouth of the small river Tau. But Oddune, Earl of Devon, who was entrenched near this place, with his retainers, made a sudden sally upon the Danish forces before sun-rising, and, coming upon them quite unexpectedly, they were put to flight with much slaughter. Hubba himself was killed, and his enchanted standard, in which the Danes put the greatest confidence, was taken. This flag, called the Reafen, because it contained the figure of a raven, which had been interwoven by the three sisters of the chieftain, with many magical ceremonies, was believed to be invincible; and this circumstance, while it seemed an ominous one to the affairs of the Danes, did not fail to revive the hearts of Alfred, and his band of devoted warriors. They therefore quitted their place of concealment, and dispersed themselves in different parties over the face of the country for the purpose of gathering fresh adherents, having previously arranged a plan of co-operation, and a place of meeting (A.D. 879).

15. But before Alfred assembled his force, and risked

again the event of another battle, he was anxious to ascertain the true situation of the enemy, and to judge of the probability of success. The camp of the principal body of the Danes was now at Westbury. Being a skilful musician, Alfred ventured to assume the character of a wandering minstrel, and in this disguise entered the Danish camp, and passed through every quarter of it unsuspected. His music and pleasant jests so amused the barbarians, that he was even introduced to the tent of Guthrum their prince, and remained with him some days. During this time he carefully noted down in his memory, whatever might be to his advantage. He observed the dissolute and indolent life of the Danes in the camp, and their general negligence and want of discipline. He heard also much of their plans and counsels, and felt assured that the time was arrived to strike a decisive blow. He therefore determined on summoning together his warlike bands to a place where they might most conveniently muster their forces. This was at Brixton, on the borders of Selwood Forest. Alfred here saw himself soon surrounded with a considerable force, for his subjects had already grown weary of the oppression of their barbarian conqueror; and they therefore joyfully resorted again to the standard of a prince, whom they had given up for lost. On his appearance, they received him with shouts of congratulation; and could hardly satiate their eyes with the sight of their beloved monarch. The presence of their valiant prince was at once sufficient to inspire them with that confidence of success which he himself expressed in his looks and words. Knowing in what quarter the Danes were weakest, he directed his attack to this point, and came upon them when they were entirely unguarded. Overthrowing their panic-stricken ranks with great slaughter, he chased the remnant of the host to an entrenchment, where they took refuge, but which could not long resist submission to his arms. He invested them so closely on every side, that hunger compelled them to implore the clemency of the victor, on any terms that he might choose to dictate. The King, with a generosity of mind that did him honour, spared their lives, and resorted to an expedient which was the only one that could be likely to make his victory secure, and convert these mortal enemies into faithful subjects and confederates. As the kingdoms of East

Anglia and Northumbria were almost left devoid of inhabitants, by the frequent inroads of the Danes, he offered them this territory, on condition that they should no longer seek to obtain their subsistence by plunder, but become a settled people, and prevent any future incursions of their countrymen from this quarter. But before he ratified this agreement with the Danes, he required them to give one pledge of receiving this offer in good earnest. They were to express their sincere desire of being in future incorporated with the English, by embracing the same religion, and receiving the covenant and sign of it in baptism. Much instruction or argument the time did not then allow; and Guthrum and his army, assenting gladly to such proposals, were all baptized. Alfred himself stood sponsor for Guthrum at the font, and gave him as his adopted son, the name of Athelstan (A.D. 880).

16. By these decisive measures, tranquillity was again restored for a time, to a kingdom which had suffered grievously by the miseries which the Danes had brought upon it. Of all the enemies that have at times infested this and other countries, these were perhaps the worst. This arose chiefly from the nature of their religious superstition, which was one so framed as to foster the worst vices of human nature. The souls of those who were slain in battle were supposed to be received into bliss into Odin's hall, called the Valhalla. There they were supposed to pass their lives in continual enjoyments, fighting and cutting each other to pieces every morning, then returning whole to dine upon the boar Serimner, who was hunted and eaten every day, and miraculously restored to life every night that he might be ready for the morrow. Their drink was fabled to be ale or intoxicating mead out of the skulls of their enemies. Men who had thus learnt to delight in the death of their enemies, and to esteem it as the pathway to heaven, were not contented with merely inflicting death; they craved for the sight of torments. The Spread Eagle of Heraldry is derived from one of their inhuman practices towards their prisoners. And among his company of pirates, Olver the Norwegian was the first to abolish a custom, then common among them, of tossing infants upon pikes, by which he obtained the name of Barnikall or preserver of children. It may easily be imagined, what must have been the misery

of a people overrun with monsters whose cruelty was religion, and whose heaven was a paradise of murderers. "But the fury of these savage invaders, though it spared no class or age, fell always in the first instance upon the monasteries, whither they were attracted by the certainty of finding large booty, and little or no resistance; perhaps also by hatred of a religion so strongly opposed in all things to their own ferocious faith, and abominable manners. There they found not only the church plate, and the abundant stores of the community, but the movable wealth of all the surrounding country, brought thither in the vain hope of miraculous protection. The annals of those disastrous times record nothing so minutely as the destruction of these extensive edifices, and the slaughter of their unoffending inhabitants. Scholars and teachers (for the monasteries were then the only schools) were indiscriminately massacred; books, which were then so rare as to be above all price, were consumed in the same flames with the building; and thus it happened that at this period of our history, there was an almost total loss of learning in the Anglo-Saxon church."

17. With the conversion of Guthrum and his army a first beginning was made for the overthrow of a system that, for a long period, had been the scourge and curse of Europe. It soon became apparent that the plan which Alfred had adopted to civilize his enemies, was attended with the best effects. The Danes who were settled in Northumbria seemed anxious to preserve the friendship which Alfred had formed with them, and the prospect was now opened of a roving and savage people acquiring a taste for a better mode of life. To encourage them to regard themselves as members of the English community, Alfred gave them the same privileges and laws as his own people enjoyed. Both were placed in all respects upon a footing of equality. The fine for the murder of a Dane was the same as that for the murder of a Saxon. The authority of a supreme prince was acknowledged in the person of the Anglo-Saxon sovereign, even by those who ruled over the Danes, and Alfred was, more properly than even his grandfather Egbert, the sole monarch of the English, for so the Saxons were now universally called.

The season of peace thus afforded to the King, he re-

solved to employ in providing means for the better security of his kingdom against dangers which it was not difficult to foresee. His first measure was to provide a navy. This was essentially necessary for the safety of the coasts, and therefore of the whole island. He had made some early efforts to obtain a fleet of ships, the advantages of which he had already experienced in repelling the Danes (A.D. 875). But he now took care to prepare a much larger naval force. The British navy must be considered as owing its first debt of honour to Alfred, who was really its founder. During this period of his life, he paid especial attention to this part of the business of an island king. Resolving to outstrip the Danes, he caused vessels to be built far exceeding theirs, in every respect. Some of them carried sixty oars, to be used, as in the ancient Roman galleys, when the wind failed; and others had even more than that number. They were constructed after a plan of Alfred's own designing, and were soon found to be exceedingly well adapted to the service intended for them. Before the close of his reign the flag of Alfred became, for the first time, what a poet of our own day styles it, "The meteor flag of England." At this early period, it floated proudly over more than a hundred vessels; and the royal fleet was divided into squadrons, some of which were stationed at different ports around the island, while others were kept continually cruising between its shores and the Continent, especially at the outlet from the Baltic Sea.

While thus guarding the coasts, and meeting the Danes on their own element ere they landed, or pursuing them in their attack upon the shores, with a vengeance swifter than that with which they themselves had carried off their prey, the fleet of Alfred did good service. But he did not forget the defence of his land territory. Castles and fortresses were built in every direction, and a local militia was raised, and kept continually on a rotation of duty. Thus there were soldiers always ready to take the field, on any alarm being given. The whole kingdom was like one great garrison; and the Danes no sooner appeared in any quarter, than they were met and opposed, without leaving other places defenceless and unprepared.

18. Alfred thus maintained his kingdom for some years

in safety and prosperity. But at length (A.D. 894) another party of his old enemies appeared on the shores of Kent, under the command of Hastings, a powerful chief, who, having ravaged all the coasts of France, and carried his devastations along the banks of the Loire and the Seine, now visited England with a fleet of three hundred and thirty sail. Occupying the port of Romney, and seizing upon the fort of Apuldore, Hastings now began to spread his forces over the neighbouring country. But Alfred flew at once with his militia to the aid of his people. The straggling parties of plunderers were cut off, and the main body were for some time kept shut up in their encampment at Apuldore. Baffled in Kent, the Dane strove, by a sudden sally, to penetrate into Essex, marching towards the Thames. Here again his plans were defeated. He was pursued, overtaken, engaged, and defeated at Farnham in Surrey. His horses and baggage were taken possession of; and being driven to his ships, one part of his force sailed up the Colne, to the Isle of Mersey in Essex; the other remnant, under his own command, took possession of Bamflete near the Isle of Canvey in the same county. Here he fortified himself strongly, and continued, for a considerable time, to harass and disturb the neighbouring country.

19. Alfred could not at once dislodge the enemy, for he had to encounter a body of Danes from Northumbria. These had been some of his own subjects, but they were again quickened into their old habits of plunder, by hearing of the arrival of so large a force of their countrymen. Guthrum, their prince, who had always kept them in obedience during his lifetime, was now dead; and, not being under the restraint of a prince of their own race, they shook off the authority of Alfred, and with two hundred and forty vessels made their landing on the south coast near Exeter. Here they had not long been, when Alfred, marching suddenly upon them, pursued them to their ships with great destruction. Those who effected their escape, sailing away to Sussex, began to plunder the country near Chichester. But the militia of Alfred, even in the absence of the King, were so well ordered, that they proved more than a match for the invaders, who were repulsed in all directions, and sustained so severe a loss of

ships and men, that they were obliged to put to sea, eturn back to Northumbria, without attempting any enterprise.

anwhile, Hastings continued to prosecute his plan of ıding. The valley of the river Lea, and the country Hertford, was then the scene of many remarkable ce exploits, in which the citizens of London took a guished part. The Lea was at that period much er and deeper than it now is, being filled by a far :r volume of water, or it could not have been sufficient e passage of the Danish ships of war, with which it seemed covered. The fortified camp of the Danes, ı was constructed with extraordinary skill, enabled , with the aid of their ships, to become again the terror e neighbouring country. Alfred having surveyed this , devised a plan which was much safer and surer than irect assault that could have been made upon this dable work. With the assistance of his brave Lon- s he raised two fortresses, one on either side of the a little below the Danish camp, and then dug three canals from the Lea to the Thames. So much water thus drawn off from the tributary stream, that the ı fleet of Hastings was soon left aground, and ren- quite useless. Upon this the terrible sea-king broke from his intrenchments in great haste, and hardly l till he had traversed the whole of that wide tract of ry lying between the Lea and the Severn. While Alfred followed Hastings, the Londoners fell upon the ıh ships and galleys. Some they broke to pieces and they got afloat again and carried round in triumph, Saxon horns and music, to the city of London. ly after this, the English army, assisted by a body of ns, attacked the Danish fortification at Bamflete, and g overpowered those who were left in its defence, and l a great part of its defenders, they found there the and two sons of Hastings. But these captives Alfred ously consented to restore, on condition that the chief- hould depart the kingdom—terms to which he presently ed, having here reaped but little profit or honour by ıterprise. Leaving the country, therefore, with a very retinue, the Sea-king sailed to the coast of France,

ascended the river Seine, and never more ventured to disturb the peace of England (A.D. 897).

This was the last great campaign against the Danes in which our hero was engaged. The remnant who had followed Hastings entrenched themselves in a camp, and prepared for their defence. Here they sustained a severe siege through the winter months, during which they were compelled to feed upon their horses, many of them perishing with hunger. At last, making a desperate effort to escape, the greater number fell in the action. Those who escaped still roved about for some time longer, at one time attacking, and at another defending themselves, with their usual fierceness, till they were all destroyed or subdued. A few of them took refuge among their brethren, who were settled in the island; and the remainder resorted to their old profession of piracy under the command of Sigebert, a Northumbrian. This freebooter had attempted to outstrip the King in the size and construction of his vessels, but without success, as Alfred soon discovered his superior skill as a naval architect. His fleet falling in with twenty of these piratical ships, which were committing some ravages in the west, captured the whole number; their crews were seized, and having been brought to trial at Winchester, they were all sentenced to the gallows as pirates, and the common enemies of mankind.

20. After these various successes, Alfred felt himself in a position to resume an authority more complete than that which he had hitherto exercised, over his Danish subjects. The East Anglian and Northumbrian Danes now made the fullest submission to him, as soon as he appeared on their frontiers; and he therefore took them under his own immediate government, without allowing them to have a king of their own race, as his viceroy. The Welsh princes also paid him a voluntary homage at this period, as well as the King of the Scots. The fame and authority of Alfred were thus fully established over great part of this island. Many foreign nations also there were, who now courted his alliance, and sent him presents. Yet although he was in reality the king and the liberator of all England, yet he only took to himself the modest title of King of the West Saxons.

The glory which Alfred had gained by his triumphs over the most formidable warriors of the age, particularly over Hastings, a chieftain who has been called, with propriety, the Scandinavian Hannibal, was indeed great. But it was still greater in his general deeds as a statesman, and in the measures he adopted for the future welfare and freedom of his country. During the rest of his reign he was thus actively employed. His first care was to rebuild some of the principal cities of his kingdom, which had been destroyed by the Danes. London and Winchester were especially indebted to him for the merit of raising them from their ruins. Instead of constructing buildings of wood, he taught his subjects to erect houses of stone and brick, such as he had seen at Rome and Milan; and having learned from his enemy Hastings the nature and value of a good fortification, and discovered, in his long contest with this clever and bold warrior, the art of erecting defensive works upon the best plan, he caused such to be raised around all the towns which he rebuilt. He ordered, also, that a survey should be made of all the coasts and navigable rivers, and that castles should be erected at those places in his dominions where they were most needed. Fifty strong fortresses and towers of this kind were thus built in different parts of the country, and the number would have been greatly increased, but for the indolence and neglect of some of his nobles and freemen.

21. The conduct of this monarch in the administration of law and justice is deserving of singular praise. He found his kingdom in the most wretched condition, owing to the disorders which had been introduced by the Danish robbers, who had made pillage and plunder so familiar a practice to many of his subjects, that it was necessary to adopt severe laws for their suppression. That he might render the execution of justice strict and regular, he divided all England into counties; these counties he divided again into hundreds, and the hundreds into tithings. Every householder was made answerable for the behaviour of his family, of his slaves, and even of his guests, if they lived above three days in his house. In the court of the hundred, a regulation was adopted for the administration of impartial justice, very similar to that of our present custom of trial by jury. From this, and from the county court, corre-

sponding to our present court of assizes, in being holden twice in a year, there was a power of appeal to the king himself; and as the people were fully sensible of the equity and great talents of Alfred, he was soon overwhelmed with appeals from all parts of England. To obviate this evil in some degree, he took care that the magistrates and judges should be better educated, and thus more fitted to inspire the people with confidence, as to the justness of their decisions; and he chose his earls or sheriffs from among those who were best known for probity and knowledge. But the better to guide these and others in the discharge of their duty, he framed a body of laws, which were the originals of that part of our legal system still known among us by the name of the Common Law. In this work Alfred was, no doubt, assisted by the codes of his predecessors. But feeling that the divine law must be the true foundation for all human legislation, he opened his code of laws with the ten commandments, a selection from the precepts of Moses, and the canons of the first Apostolic councils.* "Attend to these," said he, "and no other law book will be needed."

The particular rule upon which he proceeded in this important part of his functions as a lawgiver, will be best understood in his own words. In his doom or law book he says—"I, Alfred, king, gathered these laws together, and commanded many of those to be written which our forefathers held, and which to me seemed good; and many of those which did not seem to me good I rejected, by the counsel of my Witan†. But such things as I met with, either in the days of Ina, my kinsman, or Offa, king of the Mercians, or of Ethelbert, who first among the English race received baptism, and which appeared to be the most just, I have here collected, and rejected the rest; I, Alfred, king of the West Saxons, shewed these all to my Witan ‡, and they then said that it seemed good to them that such should be observed." (A.D. 887.)

In carrying out the practice of these laws of the land,

* Acts xv. 29.

† The Witan, or Witanagemote, was the assembly of the great council of the nation held in London twice a year.

‡ "Ancient Laws and Institutions of England," from the Saxon, printed under the direction of the Commissioners on the Public Records of the Kingdom by command of William the Fourth.

Alfred demanded of his judges the strictest impartiality. The practice of the judges had become, at this time, shamefully corrupt. The ancient London tradition, that he caused forty-four of them, who had given false judgments, to be hanged in one year, is probably an exaggerated fact; but we are assured by his biographer that he exercised great vigilance over the judges, frequently reprimanding those who did amiss, and threatening them with deprivation, and other punishments. The effect of all these wise regulations to ensure the certainty and purity of justice, was such, that it is said, towards the close of his reign, as a trial of the honesty of his people, he caused to be hung up by the highways golden bracelets and jewels, and that no one dared to touch them. Though he was thus rigorous in his laws, yet no prince ever preserved a more sacred regard to the liberty of his people. In his last will, he declared that the English justly ought for ever to remain free, even as their own thoughts.

22. A monarch whose soul was so enlarged and enlightened could not but have felt the value of learning, and he was anxious, therefore, to impart the blessings of knowledge to his subjects. In the earlier part of his reign he invited Asser to his court, who was then esteemed the most learned monk in the kingdom. A friendship of the warmest nature existed between the monarch and this distinguished man, to whom we are indebted for many particulars of the life of our hero. Alfred profited much by the conversation and learning of Asser. He made him Bishop of St. David's, and bestowed upon him other preferments. By Asser's assistance, Alfred was enabled to procure a great many more books than he could otherwise have possessed; and he employed numerous scribes in the art of copying these manuscript treasures. Before the ravages of the Danes, the churches and monasteries had contained an abundance of such things, which had been scattered or destroyed. To multiply books, and to found churches, abbeys, and schools, were thought by Alfred to be most essential to the welfare of his people; and the University of Oxford owes its origin to this monarch (A.D. 896). To encourage the labours of learned men, and to look upon them as his equals, was his constant practice. Asser, Grimbold, and Johannes Erigena, lived at his own table. The

second of these was a native of France, and is described by his bishop, as a learned priest, admirably qualified to teach and preach; an excellent singer, versed in every kind of ecclesiastical discipline, most erudite in the Holy Scriptures, and of all good morals the ornament. The third, sometimes called John the Scot, was a native of Ireland, and was a very extraordinary personage. He had travelled in Asia, as well as in Europe; had visited Athens, and resided many years in Asia Minor. He was acquainted with the Greek, the Hebrew, the Syrian, the Chaldee, and the Arabic languages, and was well versed in all the philosophy known to that age.

23. With such lights shining near him, a mind such as that which Alfred possessed could not but reflect upon his people at large, the clergy and the laity, some of this lustre. The effects of it were apparent in the general improvement of both classes. The King could no longer complain of what he himself declares was the case at the beginning of his reign, "that there were very few who could interpret the meaning of the Latin prayer book into English:" "God Almighty be thanked," says he, "there are now some holding bishopricks, who are capable of teaching." To promote this great object of instructing his people, and of conveying moral and religious information to their minds in the vernacular tongue, Alfred laboured with all the diligence of one whose life had no employment but that of a scholar. As an author, no native of England of the good old Saxon period, except Venerable Bede (A.D. 672), can be compared to this prince, either for the number or the excellence of his writings. From the Latin he translated, among other works, Bede's History, Boetius on the Consolation of Philosophy, and the Book of Psalms, with other portions of Holy Scripture. He also composed many volumes on a variety of subjects. He is said, moreover, to have been a poet, and many of his poems and ballads were sung or recited in all parts of England, though none of these have been preserved. In one of the works which he wrote, he displayed his knowledge as a geographer, which was perhaps greater than that of any monarch of his age. He had acquired this knowledge, by having at his court more than one of those travellers and voyagers, of whom there were some remarkable ones, even at this early period of our history. John the Scot, or

Erigena, who had visited many countries in the East, has been already mentioned. Another of these, named Wvlstan, had taken a voyage all round the Baltic, and gathered many particulars concerning the countries situated on that sea. A still more adventurous sailor was Audher or Othere, who had coasted the continent of Europe towards the North Pole, from the Baltic to the North Cape, and had traversed in his skiff the shores of Lapland and Finland.

24. A translation of the history of Orosius, a Spanish Chronicler, was made by Alfred. In this work he introduces an account of Germany, and describes the voyages of Audher towards the North Pole, and of Wvlstan in the Baltic; this being the substance of the information which he had collected from two of his travelled guests. From Erigena he learned some particulars of the East, which strongly affected him with a desire to know more of this region. Having heard from him that there were colonies of Syrian Christians, on the coasts of Malabar and Coromandel, who used the same language as that in which Christ spoke when on earth, he resolved to send out his well-instructed friend Swithelm, Bishop of Sherburn, to India—a tremendous voyage in those days. But the stout-hearted bishop making, as it would seem, what is now called the overland journey, went and returned in safety, bringing back presents of gems and Indian spices, with other treasures*. Hereby Alfred's fame was much increased, and the name and existence of England was heard of probably for the first time, in that remote country where, after nine centuries and a half, the sovereign authority of his nation is now almost universally acknowledged.

25. Nothing is more astonishing in the history of this great monarch than the manner in which he contrived to gain leisure for his various literary studies and occupations. This could only have been done by a steady and persevering habit in all things, and a very rigid economy of his time. When not kept in the field by the Danes, his course of life was regular in the extreme. Eight hours of each day he gave to sleep, to his meals, and exercise; eight to the affairs of his kingdom; and the remaining eight to study and devotion. To supply the want of a clock—an article then unknown in England, he marked his time by the constant

* Probably about A.D. 898.

burning of torches or candles, which were made precisely of the same weight and size. These candles were twelve inches long, and six of them lasted twenty-four hours. These time-candles were placed under the special charge of the King's chaplains; and, to prevent their being consumed in an irregular manner by currents of air, he invented for their protection a lantern, having white horn, ingeniously adapted to supply the place of sheet glass, a luxury as yet even beyond the reach of monarchs, and for some centuries afterwards *.

Of his revenue King Alfred was not less frugal than of his time. "He divided this into two portions, one of which he kept for the general purposes of State—to pay his household servants—his soldiers—his architects; and to relieve or honour, according to their worth, strangers who came from all parts to see him, or live under his roof. The other equal part of his yearly wealth he dedicated to religious uses, and those of four sorts: the first to relieve the poor; the second to build and maintain monasteries; the third to a school (some say Oxford), where he had persuaded the sons of many noblemen to study sacred knowledge and liberal arts; the fourth was for the relief of foreign churches, as far as India, or the shrine of St. Thomas, on the coast of Malabar."

26. Down to the last days of his valuable life this illustrious prince added to his other labours that of hearing all law appeals in person, with the utmost patience; and in cases of importance he revised all the proceedings with unwearied industry. His labours must have been prodigious, when we consider that they extended alike to the field of battle, the hall of justice, and the private study. We can scarcely wonder that so much activity of mind and body should have worn out too prematurely a constitution which was, from early life, subject to an internal and painful malady. This disease never quitted the King, and was more or less always a source of suffering, which he bore, however, with the most heroic and devout fortitude. In the fifty-first year of his age, and in the thirtieth of his reign, this malady proved fatal, and deprived the nation of one who was esteemed the shepherd of his people, "the darling of the

* Glass windows are said to have been first introduced into England in the reign of Henry the Second.

English," the wisest man in England, the truly great Alfred. He died, it is believed, on the festival of SS. Simon and Jude, in the last year of the ninth century, and was buried in a monastery that he had founded at Winchester.

Alfred left behind him as his successor, Edward, styled the Elder, as the first English monarch who bore that name. He was scarcely less successful than his illustrious father in his warfare with the Danes, who now again troubled the island. But in other respects he was greatly his inferior. Besides this prince, there were two other sons, and three daughters, who constituted the whole issue of Alfred by his wife Ethelswitha, the daughter of a Mercian earl. The eldest son, Edmund, died childless in his father's lifetime, and the third son, Ethelward, inherited his father's passion for letters, but passed his days in a private station.

27. Both living and dead, Alfred was regarded as the greatest prince that had appeared in Europe for several ages. Charlemagne is the only prince of that age with whom he can justly be compared, but in many respects Alfred was very far his superior, though the kingdom he governed was much less. The difficulties he had to contend with for the re-establishment of his country after the ravages of the Danes, were such as the monarch of the Franks had never experienced; and, by the admirable regulations adopted for the government of his people, the Anglo-Saxon monarch greatly excelled the Franko-German sovereign.

In a masterly genius for literary pursuits, combined with that severe moral self-discipline which is the greatest and noblest quality in all men, and more especially in a monarch, the character of Alfred stands at an immeasurable height above that of Charlemagne, or perhaps any other sovereign in the page of history. Of the wisest and best of kings that ever adorned the annals of mankind, it would at least be difficult to find one who could be considered equal to this sovereign in talents and in virtue, either as a man or as a monarch. View him in whatever aspect we may, his character has so much of the marvellous that it would be difficult to say which part of it we ought to admire most—his bravery in war, or his conduct in peace—his talents as a statesman, or his laborious efforts to improve his people as a man of letters—the genius displayed by this gifted monarch, or the indefatigable applica-

tion of his powers to promote the happiness and civilization of his subjects. In short we may regard him "as the complete model of that perfect character which, under the denomination of a sage, or wise man, philosophers have been fond of delineating rather as a fiction of their imagination than in hope of ever seeing it reduced to practice."* Such is the portrait which has been drawn of Alfred, by our master historian—and to this we may add that summary which was once given of the virtues of this monarch, by one of our greatest statesmen:—"We cannot help being amazed," says Burke, "that a prince who lived in such turbulent times, who commanded personally in fifty-four battles, who had so disordered a province to regulate, who was not only a legislator, but a judge, and who was continually superintending his armies, his navies, the traffic of his kingdom, his revenues, and the conduct of all his officers, could have bestowed so much of his time on religious exercises, and speculative knowledge; but the exertion of each of his faculties and virtues seem to have given a mutual strength to all of them. Thus all historians speak of this prince, whose whole history is one panegyric; and whatever dark spots of human frailty may have adhered to such a character, they are entirely hid in the splendour of his many shining qualities and grand virtues, that throw a glory over the obscure period in which he lived."

* Hume.

SUMMARY OF ERA THE ELEVENTH.

1. Early history of the Anglo-Saxons; their settlement in Britain; the kingdom of Kent.—2. Progress of their power; the Heptarchy.—3. The reign of Egbert.—4. Religious state of the Saxons; traces of it remaining in our language.—5. Invasion of the Danes.—6. Egbert defeats them; they renew their ravages in the following reign.—7. Their progress in the time of Ethelred; his death, and the succession of Alfred.

8. Alfred's birth and early life.—9. His education; the artifice adopted by his step-mother to excite him to learn Latin.—10. Alfred marches against the Danes, who take possession of Mercia.—11. He defeats them in several battles; loses his army in an unexpected attack at Chippenham, and goes into retirement.—12. Lives in disguise as a peasant.—13. He takes up his residence in Athelney, fortifies himself, and with his band of followers gains some advantage over the Danes.—14. The invasion of Hubba; his army is routed and destroyed; his death.—15. Alfred visits the Danish camp of Guthrum disguised as a minstrel; takes the field against his enemies, and completely subdues them; East Anglia is made a Danish province.—16. Religion of the Danes; their habits of cruelty and plunder.—17. The success of Alfred's measures in civilizing the Danes; he creates a navy, and forms a local militia.—18. The Danish invasion under Hastings; their intrenchment.—19. Alfred's stratagem to render their fleet useless; Hastings driven out of the kingdom; the remnant of his followers entirely subdued and destroyed.—20. Alfred's supremacy fully established; he restores and fortifies the principal cities, builds fortresses &c., for the defence of the coasts.—21. Alfred's efforts as a legislator; his success in the prevention of crime.—22. His friendship with Asser; Grimbold and Erigena.—23. Alfred promotes learning among the clergy; his literary labours; a great geographer.—24. He sends an embassy to

the churches of Malabar.—25. His division of his time and revenue.—26. The extraordinary character of his labours; his bodily sufferings and death; his family.—27. His character in contrast with that of Charlemagne; his superiority. Summary of his excellences by Hume and Burke.

ERA THE TWELFTH.

THE LIFE OF WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR.

THE SUBVERSION OF THE SAXON POWER IN ENGLAND—THE NORMAN CONQUEST.

1. From the death of Alfred the Great, to the period when the sway of the Saxon princes descended from him may be said to have terminated in the Norman conquest, we must pass over an interval of one hundred and sixty-six years. Of these about forty years were almost equally divided between Edward, his son, and Athelstan, an illegitimate descendant of the latter prince. Under both these princes the kingdom still continued steadily to maintain itself against the Danish disturbers, and Athelstan may in some sense be considered as more king of England than even Alfred himself, as he is said to have conquered Cornwall, a province that had not hitherto been attached to the Anglo-Saxon kingdom. Another forty years carries down the history of this kingdom to the second year of the reign of Ethelred the Second, surnamed the unready (A.D. 978). This interval was filled by no less than five princes, Edmund, Edred, Edwy, Edgar, and Edward the Martyr. Of these, the reign of the first, which lasted scarcely six years, is devoid of any interesting events. That of Edred (A.D. 940) was chiefly remarkable for the increase of the Benedictine order of monks in England, and the promotion of Dunstan to be Abbot of Glastonbury. The patronage of the monarch during his nine years' reign, was strenuously exercised to uphold monasticism and its superstitions. The next reign, that of Edwy, the nephew of Edred, though still shorter, extending only from A.D. 955 to 959, is far more con-

spicuous in the page of history; for it presents the picture of a young monarch struggling bravely to beat down the power of an inveterate superstition which was now becoming more powerful throughout the land. He undertook to combat with an arch-miraclemonger, whom his predecessor had raised to eminence, and to carry on a constant warfare with those swarms of monks who were now, with Dunstan at their head, enlisted in a fierce warfare against the married clergy, and against the King himself and his beautiful wife, Ethelgiva. The whole scene, however, terminated miserably in the triumph of the rebellious subjects of Edwy, and in the barbarous branding and cruel death of the object of his affections, an event which was speedily followed by his own, after a reign of scarcely four years.

Not less romantic and tragical is the picture that next presents itself, among the shifting scenes of the Anglo-Saxon history. Dunstan is still upon the stage, but he is now seen playing a different part. Here we behold the licentious monarch Edgar, in comparison with whom Edwy was a saint, treated with the indulgence of a favoured child. The crowned hypocrite is seen loudly rebuking the vices of the clergy, but himself indulging without restraint in the worst crimes; now building monasteries to sanctify his enormities, and receiving the loudest applause of Dunstan and his monks; at one time carrying off the nun, Editha, from a convent to become his mistress; at another, leading Elfrida as a bride to the altar, whose husband, his professed favourite, he had just murdered. Such are some of the events presenting themselves during a prosperous and fortunate reign of nearly sixteen years. Another short reign of about three years succeeds, without anything more remarkable than the struggles between the monastic and the secular clergy. It finishes with the unhappy death of Edward, styled the Martyr, from his having fallen by the hired dagger of Elfrida, his murderous stepmother, who desired to raise her own son to the throne (A.D. 978).

2. The reign of Ethelred, which next follows, exhibits an inglorious period of thirty-five years, during which the Danes became almost masters of the island, being more than once bought off by this weak prince, and occasionally encountered without success. Their simultaneous massacre throughout the land during a time of peace (A.D. 1002),

is one of the darkest chapters of our national tragedy, and paved the way for that final revenge, which they speedily took upon the Anglo-Saxon race, by expelling Ethelred and taking possession of his throne (A.D. 1014). Within three years from this period, by the death of Edmund Ironside (A.D. 1017), the son of Ethelred, the kingdom departed entirely for a season from the Saxons. During his short reign of twelve months he had been compelled, notwithstanding a firm and vigorous resistance to the Danes, to consent to a treaty for the partition of his power with Canute, King of Denmark (A.D. 1016).

Under the Danish sovereigns, who were now sole masters of the kingdom for nearly twenty-six years, of which about eighteen were occupied by Canute himself, the English nation was, upon the whole, governed well and wisely. The country now rapidly recovered from the desolation it had suffered by war and civil dissensions, and began again to assume that aspect of internal tranquillity and prosperity with which it was blessed in the later years of the reign of Alfred.

3. Canute was one of the greatest princes of his age, governing at once four kingdoms, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and England. As a zealous Christian his influence was employed in abolishing the savage rites and ceremonies of the Danish religion, and in converting his own people here and in Scandinavia to the true faith. By his liberal conduct to the church, he endeavoured in some degree to repair the injury that had been done by his countrymen. But the reigns of his two sons, Harold and Hardicanute, were of a different character, and were productive of little good to themselves, or their subjects. Happily they fill a space of hardly six years in our national annals. Of the first, whose bodily agility is remembered in his name of Harefoot, little is recorded except his cruelty to his half-brother Alfred, whose eyes he put out, and his barbarous murder of six hundred vassals of one of his nobles called Alfred, by which he proved himself to be in blood and manners a true Dane. The name of Hardicanute, or Canute the Hardy, bespeaks his bodily or robust qualities. But the manner of his death by drunkenness at the marriage of a Danish lord, within two years after his accession, is sufficient to denote his brutal habits. The most notorious action of his life was that of renewing the

imposition of the tax called Danegelt, to pay a large sum of money to the fleet that brought him from Denmark.

4. With this prince terminated the Danish line (A.D. 1042), and the restoration of the Saxons to power, in the person of Edward the son of Ethelred, an amiable but weak-minded prince, who having married the daughter of Earl Godwin, and afterwards refused to hold commerce with her as a wife, deprived himself of all issue, and laid the foundation for that contest between the rival claims of Harold the Saxon and William the Norman, which terminated in the settlement of the Normans in England. The education of Edward in Normandy, and the distinguished favours heaped by him upon many of this race, are among the most remarkable signs of a reign, which, though comparatively long, extending as it did over twenty-five years, must be considered as one, entirely preparatory and introductory to that which was to succeed it. Edward closed his peaceable, and, upon the whole, fortunate career A.D. 1066, having gained by some of his supposed virtues the ambiguous title of Saint and Confessor. His attention, however, to the administration of justice, and his humanity and piety, greatly endeared his memory to the English people. With him expired the last of the line of Saxon princes, whose dynasty, after a period of more than six hundred years, was to give place to that far more illustrious one, now about to be established in the person of a hero, the life and actions of whom it is the more special subject of this last chapter of our history to record.

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5. William the Conqueror, as he is usually styled, was descended from that bold and piratical race of Northmen, who, in the ninth and the beginning of the tenth century, won for themselves a settlement in a part of France, which still bears the name of Normandy. At this period Rollo, a petty prince or chieftain of Denmark, with a roving band of adventurers, consisting of Norwegians, Frisns, Danes, and others, after laying waste the inland and maritime provinces of France by their destructive ravages, were at length content with the offer of Charles the Simple, to receive a grant of some of those provinces which they had nearly depopulated (A.D. 911). The province of Neustria, thus relin-

quished to the haughty Dane, was required to be held in vassalage to the feeble monarch who represented the fallen glory of Charlemagne. To bind him the faster to his interest, Charles also gave him his daughter Gisla in marriage, and bestowed upon him other gifts. For this he was induced, after some hesitation, to render homage by one of his captains. But the Danish officer who was commissioned for this purpose, resenting it as an indignity, and despising so unwarlike a prince, resolved to show his indignation. As if about to perform the ceremony of homage in the usual manner, he caught hold of the foot of the monarch; and under a pretence of kissing it, lifted it so high as to throw him backward, and overturn him from his seat in the presence of all his courtiers. This insult the French were too weak to avenge, and Rollo and his descendants knew how to vindicate and defend the territory which they had obtained by the sword.

6. Ninety years after the establishment of the Normans in France, the Duke Richard gave his sister Emma in marriage to Ethelred, king of England (A.D. 1001). From this marriage was born Edward the Confessor, who, having been brought up in Normandy, became strongly attached to the country of his education, and to the race with whom he was naturally allied. An important connection was thus formed with a country, whose princes were hereafter destined to supplant and subdue the remaining descendants of the Anglo-Saxon race of kings.

The individual for whom this great work was reserved, was the grandson of this Richard who had first formed a family alliance with the English sovereign. William, afterwards surnamed the Conqueror, had for his father, Robert, the seventh Duke of Normandy. He was a great warrior, and, partly because of the violence of his temper, and of his being much given to ungodly pleasures, and partly owing to a belief that he had dealings with witches and necromancers, he obtained the name of Robert the Devil. Smitten with the beauty of Harlotta, a skinner's daughter of the town of Falaise, he made her his mistress, and she became the mother of a son (A.D. 1024), who, in after times, when he had obtained the sovereignty of England, was but little ashamed of his illegitimate birth. In the charter of the lands which he bestowed upon Alan, duke of Bretagne, at

Richmond in Yorkshire, he subscribed himself William surnamed Bastardus. According to historians, William was from the moment of his birth regarded as a child destined to become a mighty man. One symptom of his future greatness was, to grasp with his baby hand, at the moment of his birth, the rushes on the floor of his mother's lying-in chamber; an omen it seems, which according to the feudal customs of those days, was esteemed as a proof that he thus "took seizin" of all within his reach, and that with a bold hand he would maintain what he laid hold of, against all challenges.

7. Robert regarded his son with the same favour as if he had been his legitimate offspring. When he was a year old he publicly acknowledged him, and caused him to receive the education of a prince, in his own palace. From his fifth year William's character, as a future leader and legislator, began to show itself. He selected a company of boys of his own age, of whom he formed a battalion. They were entirely under his command, and he practised military exercises with them, according to the custom of the age. Over this little troop of soldiers in miniature, William was always a sovereign. In all disputes he was referred to as an arbiter, and his early decisions gave proof of his quickness of mind and love of justice. Nor was his literary education neglected for exercises of this kind. Few princes have given evidences of being more deligently tutored, or more ready to learn in early life. At the age of eight years he was able to read and explain the Commentaries of Julius Cæsar. The importance which he then, and always after placed upon education, may be judged of by one of his sayings, "that an illiterate king was but a crowned ass."

8. This promising boy had only reached his seventh year when his father placed him in the virtual possession of his own rights as Duke of Normandy (A.D. 1031). Robert the Devil, either with the hope to obtain the remission of his sins, or for some other purpose, resolved to set out on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. But before he departed, he determined to place his son, in whom he greatly delighted, in possession of the dignity to which he could not legally lay claim, on account of the stain upon his birth. He therefore assembled his barons, and presenting to them his

princely and beautiful boy, assured them that he was his own son. "He is little," said he, "but he will grow. I declare him to be mine heir, and I give him possession, from this moment, of the Duchy of Normandy. Choose him then forthwith, and I will appoint him my successor in the presence of you all."

The barons readily yielded to the wish of their departing Duke, and each swore fidelity to his young substitute. Alan, duke of Brittany, was appointed to rule the dominions of Robert during the minority of William, and in the absence of his father.

But the latter being especially anxious for the safety of his son, carried him to Paris and delivered him into the hands of the King of France, his suzerain, or paramount lord. Having received a promise of his protection, and having secured that monarch's acknowledgment of his son's title to the dukedom, he set out upon his pilgrimage, but never again returned to his dominions. The last tidings of him were brought by Piron, a returned pilgrim from the Holy Land, who reported that he met his lord the Duke of Normandy on his way to Jerusalem, but carried in a litter, on the shoulders of four stout Saracens, being too ill to proceed thither on foot. When the Duke recognised his vassal, he exclaimed eagerly, "Tell my valiant peers that you have seen your sovereign carried towards Heaven on the backs of fiends."

9. At the court of France William completed his education, and in due season was called by those who had sworn fealty to him, to take possession of the government which now devolved upon him. His country required the presence of its sovereign, to vindicate his own rights, and to save the people from the power of factions that were disturbing it in every direction. The title of William to his father's duchy being considered as questionable, various rivals started up, to dispute with him for his inheritance. The King of France invaded his dominions. His cousin, Guy of Burgundy, formed more than one plot against his life; and almost every Norman noble who imagined he had a drop of the blood of Rollo in his veins, was ready to take the field as a claimant for the tempting dukedom. William, however, was possessed of energies that made him more

than a match for them all, and he possessed some faithful and powerful friends. Of these the foremost were Raol de Gace and Roger de Beaumont, the counsellors of his father, and his tutors in the art of war. By their aid he was enabled to defeat the King of France, and to maintain the dignity of a great military chieftain, at a period of life when princes usually think of little else than indulging themselves in the follies or amusements of youth.

10. The young Duke much strengthened his cause at this season by forming a matrimonial alliance with Matilda, the daughter of Baldwin, earl of Flanders. He could scarcely have selected a bride from any of the families of Europe, that was of more noble ancestry. Her mother, Eleonora, was the daughter of Richard the Second, his own grandfather, and was also a direct descendant from Alfred the Great, through the marriage of his daughter Elstrith with Baldwin the Second, of Flanders. To ally himself with his fair cousin was an object which William had set his heart upon, long before it could be accomplished. A less determined character would have given up the pursuit of it as hopeless. But nothing could divert such a man from his purpose. It was in vain that his foes and jealous kinsmen intrigued against him in the Flemish court, or that the parents of the lady demurred, on account of his birth and doubtful title, or that the Church of Rome interdicted such a marriage; or, worse than all, that the lady herself, having set her affections on a young Saxon nobleman, who was ambassador at her father's court, treated the advances of William with coldness and disdain. His fiery spirit, after a seven years unsuccessful wooing, became too violent to be controlled or resisted.* The Chronicle of the times states, that in the year 1047 he resorted to a singular expedient. He waylaid Matilda in the streets of Bruges, as she was returning from mass, seized her, rolled her in the dirt, spoiled her rich array, and, not content with these outrages, struck her repeatedly, and then rode off at full speed. This curious Teutonic mode of courtship, according to the Chronicle, brought the affair to a favourable issue. Matilda, either

* As William was not married for several years afterwards, the Chronicle of Inger has probably falsified the date of this transaction, or the anecdote is not authentic.

convinced of the dangerous nature of William's passion, or of the sincerity of it, or what is equally probable, seeing that her affection for the fair Brihtric Meaw was never likely to meet with a requital, repented, though late, of her indisposition to receive the Norman Duke's addresses, and gave her consent to become his wife (A.D. 1052).

11. This marriage, which proved a source of much domestic happiness, both to William and his bride, was also of advantage in other respects. He was now united to a legitimate descendant of the royal line; and he had acquired a powerful ally in his father-in-law, the Earl of Flanders. His satisfaction would therefore have been complete, but for the interference of Mauger, the archbishop of Rouen, an illegitimate uncle of the young Duke, who pronounced sentence of excommunication upon the newly-wedded pair, for having contracted a marriage within the forbidden degrees of kindred. An appeal to the Pope was thus rendered necessary: and Lanfranc, afterwards raised to be Archbishop of Canterbury, was entrusted with the negociation on the part of William and Matilda. A papal dispensation was speedily obtained, on the easy terms of founding a couple of abbeys. William founded the convent of St. Stephen's at Caen, making Lanfranc abbot, and Matilda that of the Holy Trinity for nuns (A.D. 1052).

The ground for the building of these sacred edifices was not very honestly obtained; and the transaction itself affords an instance of the manner in which the Romish Church of those days compounded with its faithful subjects for their vices or their frailties.

12. There can be little doubt, however, that the impulse which was thus given to the building of religious houses operated powerfully to produce a taste for architecture. William from this time became a great builder, and his consort shared in all his tastes. He built a palace for himself, in connection with the Abbey of St. Stephen's, and the stately buildings which were erected under the joint patronage of these munificent rulers, are yet among the finest relics of Norman grandeur. One great undertaking naturally begets another, and William, at his own expense, thus built the first pier that was ever constructed at Cherbourg. His views became more enlarged; and he next superintended the building of ships, and the fitting out of fleets. He

selected the most convenient places on the coast for harbours; drew up plans for the advancement of trade, and thus endeavoured to render Normandy a considerable maritime power, and the mistress of the channel.

13. An ambitious mind like that possessed by William, could not long be content with so narrow a dominion as that of Normandy. His marriage with Matilda strengthened his connection with the English monarch; and on paying a visit to his court, which he did by invitation shortly after that event, he was received with so many flattering marks of distinction, that it could not be doubted they were tokens of Edward's strong affection for a prince at whose father's court he had been so well received, during the season of adversity. It is said, that when he arrived with a numerous and splendid train, he could scarcely believe that he had quitted his own country; for Normans commanded the Saxon fleet he met at Dover, Normans garrisoned the castle at Canterbury, and as he advanced on his journey, Norman knights, bishops, abbots, and burgesses, met him at every relay, to bid him welcome to England. Such a reception, and such a state of things, must have opened his eyes to the prospects before him, if he had not already entertained them. The Duke of Normandy had also chosen a favourable time for his visit. It was the period when Godwin and his sons were in exile, and it is therefore highly probable that he availed himself of their absence, to obtain from Edward the promise of being adopted as his successor to the English throne. From this time, A.D. 1052, he commenced a series of political intrigues connected with that great project which, about fourteen years afterwards, he carried into effect.

14. No very conspicuous event occurs in the records of his court till the year 1065, when Harold, the son of Earl Godwin arrived there by accident. Landing in his fishing boat, which had been driven to sea by stress of weather, and obliged to put into the river Maye, he was seized by Guy, Count of Ponthieu, and detained a prisoner. The Duke of Normandy, however, demanded the captive; for Harold's brother was husband to the Duchess of Normandy's sister. Harold's ransom was liberally purchased with a large sum of money, and a landed estate; and the prisoner being set free, was received at the Norman court

with every sign of friendship. But it was soon apparent, that William's design was to extort from his guest a solemn oath to render him all the assistance in his power, in obtaining the kingdom of England, after King Edward's death. Knowing that his life would be in danger if he refused to take this oath, Harold consented, swearing over the relics of the saints, which were secretly introduced without his being then aware of it, under the cloth of gold which covered the table where the ceremony was performed. The conditions bound him to marry Adele, the daughter of William, and to send him his own sister, for marriage with one of his nobles.

William now felt assured that Harold's promise would not be violated, no matter how extorted; for the superstition of those days was great, and Harold, as the Norman chroniclers say, when the cloth was lifted up, and he was shown the holy relics, turned pale and shuddered. But the Duke of Normandy had not yet learnt that ambition may be stronger than even superstition or religion. He had forgotten also, that oaths extorted by fraud and violence have never been esteemed as binding. Harold soon taught him these lessons. On the death of the Confessor (A.D. 1066), his popularity became at once more apparent than before. He seized the sceptre which was offered him by a vast assembly of Saxon chiefs and nobles, and London citizens, and was without delay solemnly crowned king, by Stigand, Archbishop of Canterbury.

15. William was hunting in the forest, near Rouen, with a great company, when a messenger arrived from England, bearing the news of the death of the Confessor, and of the coronation of Harold. The bow dropped from his hand as he listened to the intelligence, and he stood speechless with indignation and surprise. Then fastening and unfastening his cloak several times, without knowing what he did, he looked so fiercely, that no one dared to speak to him. Hurrying to the river side and crossing the stream, he rushed towards his palace, threw himself into a chair, and buried his face in his robe. In this stormy but sullen mood he continued some time, during which his courtiers looked at one another with amazement. A word or two from the seneschal at length brought him to an explanation, and then the tempest of his anger began to pour forth in bitter

denunciations against Harold, as a deceiver and betrayer, who had usurped the English crown. One of his barons advised him to send to Harold, and demand the immediate surrender of this dignity. A messenger was therefore instantly dispatched to charge him with the violation of his oath, and the breach of his marriage contract. The latter act he had been guilty of, by marrying Algitha, sister to the powerful Earls Morcar and Edwin. But a bolder course was presently resolved upon, and William's next measure was to assemble his Norman peers, and to make known to them his determination to assert his right to the English crown by force of arms.

Great differences of opinion at first existed among these nobles; some liberally proffering their services, others holding back from the project. The council chamber became a scene of uproar, from which the Duke retired greatly perplexed. But sending for his barons one by one, and exerting upon each separately his powers of persuasion, as well as promising to reward them richly with the Saxon spoils, they were all by degrees brought over to the views of their chieftain. The states of the duchy, although at first adverse to the project of William, at last consented liberally to assist their prince, on the condition, that this concession to his wishes should not be esteemed a precedent for any future demands of a like nature.

16. William had arrived at the age of forty-two, when he was thus preparing to invade England. He called in to his aid not only his own subjects, but his neighbours the Bretons, the men of Boulogne, and others from all the provinces between the Rhine and the Alps; and to all those who would enlist under his banners, he offered large promises of booty. The idle adventurers of half Europe flocked eagerly to his standard. To the King of France he held out a proposal of acknowledging him as his Lord paramount for England, as well as Normandy, if he would assist him in this object with a supply of money, men, and arms. But Philip treated it as an extravagant idea, and William was glad to secure the valuable aid of Matilda's father, by the promise of a perpetual pension in the event of success. The Pope's countenance of the design was not the least important circumstance at this crisis; for the Roman Pontiff was now beginning to assert his

authority over all the princes of Europe, and to assume the office of an arbiter and mediator in all the doubtful claims, or disputes, that so often occurred between the monarchs of this age.

Alexander, the reigning Pope, had rightly conjectured, that the conquest of England by the Normans would not fail to bring the English church to a closer union and conformity with that of Rome. He therefore encouraged the Duke of Normandy in this enterprise, and pronounced Harold a perjured usurper. He also sent to William a consecrated banner and a ring with one of St. Peter's hairs (as he called the relic) inclosed within it. Fortified thus by the sanction of the highest authority, and with a fleet of three thousand vessels, which contained sixty thousand soldiers, he was now in a condition to vindicate his claim to the English crown, with some prospect of success.

17. Previously to joining his forces, he took care to provide for his hereditary dominions, by formally investing Matilda, his consort, with the regency of Normandy, associating with her in this office, their eldest son Robert, then in his thirteenth year. For her council he selected some of the wisest prelates and nobles, the most celebrated of whom was Roger de Beaumont. He then proceeded to St. Valleri, where his armament was already assembled. Here his Queen surprised him by the present of a beautiful ship of war, which she had secretly caused to be built for him, and adorned in a most sumptuous manner. To this vessel was given the name of the Mora. At the prow of it, there was the figure of his eldest son William, in gold. He was represented holding in one hand a trumpet; in the other a bow with the arrow just fitted to the string and ready to be discharged. The vessel's sails were of divers colours; and on these, and on other parts of it, there was painted conspicuously, the national ensign of Normandy, which consisted of three lions.

18. After so many preparations, there was still one thing wanting, which was a fair wind. In consequence of this cause of delay, the soldiers began to murmur and grow mutinous. William, therefore, took an effectual method to silence their clamours. He ordered the bones of St. Valleri to be brought forth, and his intercession to be implored for

a more favourable wind. These relics were accordingly laid upon the turf, beneath the open canopy of heaven, and exposed to view in the shrine which inclosed them. Prayers, and alms, consisting of gold, silver, and other precious things, were offered to the saint; and superstition, piety, or charity, whichever it may be termed, served the purpose of amusing and quieting the multitude, until the desired breeze sprung up, from a favourable quarter. William then lost no time in hoisting his blood-red flag on the Mora; and, rejoicing in the proud gift of his beloved Matilda, he launched forth at the head of his fleet,—his bosom swelling with glorious presages of the future, which were soon to be realized.

The Mora sailed so well that she soon outstripped all the rest of the ships, and William became anxious for their safety, during the rough and stormy weather which attended him, in the first part of his voyage. But as he drew near to the English coast, his fleet again hove in sight, and with a forest of masts, and a great press of sails, were seen bearing on gallantly towards him. Two only of the fleet had foundered during the storm. In one of them was a noted astrologer, who had predicted that Harold would resign England to the Duke without a battle. When William heard of this he shrewdly observed, that such a man could surely have known but little of the fate of others, if he could not foresee his own.

19. On the 28th of September, A.D. 1066, the Norman fleet entered the bay of Pevensey and cast anchor. Here the coast was flat, and the country behind it marshy and unpicturesque; but on one side of the bay stood the noble Roman walls of Pevensey, and on the other the bold cliffs and sloping downs of Hastings. An old chronicler thus describes the landing of the Duke and his armament:—

"The knights and archers landed first. After the soldiers came the armourers, masons, and carpenters, with their tools in their hands, and planes, saws, and axes, and other implements slung to their sides. Last of all came the Duke himself, who, stumbling as he leaped ashore, measured his majestic length upon the beach. Forthwith, all raised a cry of distress. "An evil sign is here," exclaimed the Normans; but the Duke, who, in recovering himself had filled his hands

with sand, cried out with a loud and cheerful voice—"See, sirs! by God's splendour, I have seized England with my two hands. Without challenge, no prize can be made, and that which I have grasped, I will by your good help maintain."

The reader will not fail to remember a very similar story of the first landing of Julius Cæsar in Africa *. This probably supplied the quick-witted Norman chief with so happy a turn of speech, which effectually relieved the perturbations of some of his courageous followers.

20. A full fortnight before the arrival of William and his fleet, Tostig, the brother of Harold, who still bore him a rancorous hate, and who had married the sister of Matilda, landed on the English coast. Measures were arranged by Harfinger, king of Norway, and by Tostig, that they should make an attack upon England at the same time with William. But the contrary winds which delayed the fleet of the latter had speeded the sails of his northern ally, so that Harfinger and Tostig entered the Tyne with three hundred ships, and commenced the work of devastation, while the Duke of Normandy was lying with his wind-bound ships at St. Valleri. In their first encounter with the English they were successful, and Morcar, Earl of Northumberland, and Edwin, Earl of Mercia, two powerful supporters of Harold, were both slain in the field of battle. But Harold, whose popularity was great, soon hastened with a large army to the north, and meeting his enemies at Stamford Bridge, revenged the death of these noblemen, and gained a complete victory, which ended not only in the overthrow of the Norwegians, but in the death of Tostig and Harfinger.

21. On receiving this unfavourable news, William manifested no surprise, but turning to his nobles, he said, "You see the astrologer's prediction was false. We cannot gain the land without a battle, and here I vow that if it shall please God to give me the victory, on whatever spot it shall befall, I will build a church to be consecrated to the blessed Trinity, and to St. Martin, where perpetual prayers shall be offered up for the sins of Edward the Confessor, for my own sins, for the sins of Matilda my spouse, and for the sins of such as have attended me in this expedition, but more particularly for the sins of such as may fall in the contest."

* See Chapter I.

22. This vow, sincerely made in the spirit of the age, reassured the minds of all his followers, and determined them to behave like brave soldiers in the approaching battle. As for Harold, he had little calculated that the day which was to decide his fate was so near at hand. Beyond the Humber he was rejoicing in the spoils that had fallen into his lap, and dreaming that the Duke of Normandy had delayed his threatened invasion until the spring. From this dream he was suddenly awakened by the arrival of a knight, who, posted behind a hill, had witnessed the landing of the mighty host. Girding on his sword, and taking his lance, he mounted upon his swiftest steed, halting not for rest or refreshment till he had found Harold, to whom he told his alarming tidings in these words,—"The Normans are come. They have landed at Hastings and built up a fort, which they have enclosed with a foss and palisades; and they will soon rend the land from thee and thine unless thou defend it well!"

23. But Harold was little disposed to despair or to mistrust his good fortune. To the popular predictions of the day, he gave but little heed. The sight of a comet with its three long tails streaming towards the south (as it is described by the chroniclers), and which had appeared just about the time of the death of Edward, highly ominous as it seemed to the people, had produced but faint impressions on a mind that could despise the sanction of an oath, sworn over the relics of the saints. He was even insensible to the wise counsel offered by his brother Gurth, who urged him on various grounds to avoid, for the present, an encounter with the invader. With a rashness elated by prosperity, and stimulated by his natural courage, he resolved at once to meet his enemies in person; and for that reason marched towards Hastings, where they had now taken up their quarters. He was so confident of success, that he sent a message to the Duke, promising him a large sum of money, if he would leave the kingdom without risking a battle, but his offer was rejected with disdain. William, asserting proudly his claim to the throne of England, reminded Harold again of his oath, and required him to hold the kingdom from him in fealty, or to submit to the arbitration of the Pope, or to fight him in single combat. Harold replied that the crown was not his to give away, or to

surrender upon any terms; that the God of battles should decide their quarrel, and that he would be ready to meet him in the field on the Saturday following.

24. The challenge was accepted; for on that day, so fatal to the Saxon cause, Harold fulfilled his promise, and planted his gonfalon or standard on the very spot where Battle Abbey now stands.

Very different was the conduct of the two armies on the eve of battle. The English indulged themselves in a riotous carousal, dancing, laughing, and gambling all night. But the Normans spent this season in prayer, in silence, or in confessing their sins. The day on which the battle was to take place being a Saturday, they made a vow, by the advice of their spiritual directors, that if they obtained the victory, they would never more eat flesh on that day, an obligation which until very lately was observed by the Roman Catholics throughout England.

25. When the morning arrived, William put on his armour for the encounter, but either in his haste or agitation, he unwittingly placed the hind part of his hauberk before. He quickly perceived what he had done, but with his usual readiness observed, that this mischance was no bad omen, for if it meant anything it was, that he who had before been only a duke, should soon by an extraordinary reverse be turned round into a king. Then calling his chief officers together he addressed them in a speech, still more fitted to animate their courage, by appealing to the motives that might be likely to animate them for the service of the day—the prospect of conquest and the shame and dread of defeat. When he had mounted his war-charger he looked so noble and majestic, that one of his barons (to use the language of the chronicler) exclaimed,—"There is no other knight like him under heaven! A fair count he is and a fair king he will be. Let him fight and he will overcome, and shame be to him who shall fail him." William's horse was a fine Spanish barb, which a rich Roman had brought him on his return from the famous shrine of St. James of Compostella. Around his neck he wore suspended some of the holy relics upon which Harold had sworn. Behind him was marshalled the pride of the Norman nobility; and at his side was Tonstain, who had accepted the dangerous office, which two barons had declined, of carrying the standard, blessed by the

Pope. Not the least remarkable personage who attended him was Odo, bishop of Bayeux, who had just celebrated mass in the field on a portable altar. The warlike prelate had just given his benediction to the troops, having put on his episcopal robe over the coat of mail; and now having laid it aside, he appeared mounted on a large white horse, holding his lance in his hand and leading on his troop of cavalry. Another singular character in the scene was Taillefer, who was seen spurring his horse in front of the vanguard, and acting at once the part of minstrel, juggler, and champion. He was a gigantic Norman, and cheered on his fellow warriors by singing with a loud voice, the popular song of Roland, who had gained so signal a glory in the great fight at Roncesvalles, in the days of Charlemagne. While Taillefer was singing, he performed some curious feats with his mace, throwing it with great dexterity and force into the air, and catching it as it fell, now in one hand and now in the other. The Normans repeated the chorus of the strain and shouted,—"Dieu aide, Dieu aide!" Craving permission to strike the first blow, this valiant champion rushed forward, ran one Saxon through the body and threw a second to the ground, but whilst attacking a third with the same rash courage, he received a mortal wound, and singing his last war-song, he fell in the act of devoutly crossing himself—the foremost of those many illustrious victims who were now about to vindicate the Norman cause by a fearless sacrifice of life and fortune.

26. Harold had already taken up his position on some rising ground, and fortified the ridge of the hill with trenches and palisades. As the Normans approached, shouting "God is our help," the Saxons responded by the cry of "Christ's cross." According to ancient privilege, the men of Kent stood in the first line of the English army, and the burgesses of London formed the body guard of the sovereign, and were drawn up around the royal standard. At the foot of this ensign stood Harold himself, with his two stout brothers Gurth and Leofwin, and some of the noblest and bravest of the thanes of England.

The Norman forces were seen arrayed in three divisions. Montgomery and Fitzosbern led on the first, consisting of archers, and the light-armed infantry; Geoffrey Martel led the second, containing the heavy-armed battalions; and the

Duke headed the third, which was composed of the flower of his army, the cavalry being so disposed, that they stretched beyond the infantry and flanked it at each extremity of the line.

27. In the contest which now began, by a fierce and furious onset of the Normans upon the Saxons, the latter for a time maintained their ground resolutely, and fought with great valour. The Norman cavalry, from the nature of the ground, which was a rugged ascent, could not gain any decisive advantage, and they received a severe check, a large body of them being thrown into confusion and driven into a deep trench which had been artfully covered and concealed by the Saxons. At this moment a cry was raised that William was slain: his horse had indeed been killed, and he had some difficulty to stop the fugitives by uncovering his face and his head, and crying out, "Here I am! Look at me! I am alive, and by God's help will conquer!"

William who now found himself on the brink of destruction, exerted himself most vigorously, rallied his dismayed forces, and brought up the second line, which consisted of some of the bravest of his troops, who were armed with the heaviest weapons, and arranged in the firmest order. Finding, however, that the enemy still made a very stout defence, and that he could produce but little impression upon the solid masses of the Saxon army, who derived much advantage from their position on the crest of the hill, he resolved upon a bold stratagem. He commanded a troop, consisting of a thousand chosen men of his cavalry, to make a feint of charging; and then by a hasty retreat to draw the enemy from their solid array and from the ground which had hitherto been so favourable to their acting on the defensive. This stratagem was entirely successful. The Saxons, believing that the last reserve of the Normans had failed them, raised a wild shout, and dispersing themselves abroad followed the fugitives down into the plain. William then gave orders that the infantry, some of whom had also assumed the appearance of being put to flight, should now face about upon the pursuers, while the reserve of cavalry made an assault upon their wings. It was thus that the Saxons were at once surrounded by bands, who penetrated into their ranks, cut them down by hundreds, and drove the remainder back to the higher ground. Here for a while

they rallied again under Harold, and seemed disposed to dispute the victory to the last extremity. As evening approached William brought up all his forces to make a final charge upon the Saxons; and on this occasion Harold was struck by a random arrow which entered his eye, and pierced into the brain. His gallant brothers also fell, and the English, greatly discouraged by the death of their princes, began to give way, and were now attacked with redoubled vigour. The royal standard was seized, after a severe struggle, which cost the Normans ten of their best knights, besides Robert Fitz-Ernest. The consecrated banner of their country was hoisted in its room, and the monarchy of the Saxons was at an end.

28. This ever-memorable battle lasted nine hours, and the sun was just setting when it closed. William had three horses killed under him, but did not receive a single wound. He pitched his tent that night in the field of the dead, which in memory of the dreadful slaughter that had dyed the soil to a crimson hue, was ever called by him the Vale of Sanguelac. The loss of the Saxons on this occasion is computed at three-score thousand, but the victory was not won without the sacrifice on the side of the Normans of fifteen thousand of their bravest soldiers. Before leaving Normandy a muster-roll had been made, specifying the names and qualities of all who attended this expedition. On the morning after the battle, all who survived were drawn up in a line, and their names were called over. To a fourth of the names no answer was returned; and, among the missing dead, were many of the noblest lords and bravest knights of Normandy. The living heroes crowded around the Duke; and their eager looks, as well as their swords and other weapons still stained with blood, could not but remind him of his promises. A new roll was therefore prepared, in which was inscribed the names of all the nobles and gentlemen who had survived the combat; and this roll was afterwards deposited in Battle Abbey, when the Conqueror fulfilled his solemn vow. On the hill which Harold occupied so long and defended so gallantly, this structure was soon after built; and it is said that the high altar of the Church was placed on that very spot where the last of the Saxon kings had raised his standard.

29. Harold's story was one which formed a very pathetic

subject for the old writers of English history. We are told that his dead body could not for some time be found, and lay undistinguished among the heaps of the fallen, who had been stripped or plundered by the Normans. But the monks sent for a beautiful young Saxon lady, to whom Harold had been passionately attached. Editha, or the "Swan-necked," was not long in discovering the features, too well known, of her once royal lover. The mother of Harold, anxious for the remains of her son, offered to purchase them at any price of the Conqueror. But William yielded them readily without a ransom to the afflicted Githa, and punished one of his own soldiers, who had boasted of having gashed the leg of the Saxon king after he had fallen. Harold was buried in his own abbey church, which he had founded at Waltham, and over his tomb there was placed the simple but expressive epitaph, "Harold infelix."

30. The battle of Hastings thus gained on the sixteenth day after the landing of William, or on the 14th of October (A.D. 1066), was one which, although it cost the Conqueror a fourth part of his army, did not put him in possession of a fourth part of the kingdom. He had still to fight his way step by step, before the Saxons and Britons could be brought, as a nation, to submit to the Norman yoke. The wars which William had to carry on, for the subjugation of the territory which he claimed as his own, extended over the West, the North, and the East of the kingdom; and, with intervals of tranquillity, were prosecuted for a period of seven or eight years. Before he could even reach the capital, he had to reduce Romney, whose inhabitants he severely chastised for the ill-treatment of some of his seamen, who had been driven thither by distress of weather. From thence he marched on to Dover, which offered but a feeble resistance. The men of Kent appeared in arms against him, but having made them a promise of some peculiar privileges, and satisfied their other demands, he at length made his triumphal entry into London. An unsuccessful movement had been attempted there in favour of Edgar Atheling, the representative of the Saxon line of kings. But Stigand, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Earl Morcar, who had at first espoused his cause, soon deserted him, and made their submission to William. On Christmas Day, or as our ancestors called it, Midwinter Day,

the coronation of the Conqueror took place in Westminster Abbey. Up to that period so brilliant a coronation had never been witnessed in this country. The most considerable part of the nobility, both English and Norman, assisted at the stately ceremony. The honour of placing the crown on the head of William was assigned, on this occasion, to Aldred, Archbishop of York, Stigand having excited the jealousy of the new Sovereign, and having, according to his opinion, obtained the primacy in an irregular manner. Just before this part of the ceremony took place, Aldred made a solemn pause, and, turning to the English nobles, asked them if they were willing to have the Duke of Normandy for their king, to which they all replied with loud acclamations of assent. By permitting or ordering such a question to be asked, and by taking the usual oath of the English kings at their coronation, William made it manifest, that he did not assume so much the right of reigning by conquest, as by the expressed will of the nation. But whilst this ceremony was proceeding within the Abbey, an event happened which might have been attended with fatal results. The guards of William, who stood outside, were greatly alarmed by the shouts which they heard within the building, and being jealous that some disturbance had arisen which threatened danger to their great leader, there arose a tumult and dispute between them and the English. In the midst of this, some of the houses adjoining the Abbey were discovered to be on fire—and an alarm being given, the ceremony was terminated, and the Prince and his attendants rushed out of the building as quickly as possible. The sight of the King, wearing his crown and coronation robes, at once sufficed to allay the tumult, and to arrest the violent proceedings of both parties.

31. The event, however, seems to have aroused in some measure the suspicious fears of the Conqueror, and his treatment of the English was sufficient to show that he did not repose much confidence in their loyalty. He disarmed London and other great towns, besides building citadels in them, which might keep their inhabitants in entire subjection, when garrisoned with foreign troops. All the real power of the magistracy he transferred without scruple to the Normans, and quartered solders everywhere, leaving no force that might be able to resist him anywhere. He made provision for the re-

gular payment of his soldiers; and to bind his great officers of state and military captains most effectually to his service, he hastened to bestow upon them the forfeited estates of the Saxons. All those barons and knights who had attended him from Normandy were, sooner or later, richly rewarded by the spoils of those who had fallen in battle, or in some other manner. Hugh de Abrincis, his sister's son, had the whole county of Chester afterwards given him, and erected into a palatinate; Robert, earl of Mortaigne, had nine hundred and seventy-three manors and lordships; Odo, bishop of Bayeux, four hundred and thirty-nine; and all the other distinguished nobles in like proportion. It is computed, as an evidence of this extravagant bounty, that in the large county of Norfolk there were, soon after this time, only about sixty proprietors of land.

32. In adopting these measures to inspire gratitude as well as fear, the Conqueror showed that he was not unmindful of the necessity of ruling by policy, as well as by terror. And to carry out his plans more effectually, he confirmed to London and all other cities of England, their ancient privileges. He confiscated the estates of Harold and others; yet he received also many into his favour who had carried arms against him, or opposed his claims. To the clergy, both at home and abroad, who had contributed to his success, he expressed his gratitude in the strongest manner. He sent the royal standard of Harold, accompanied by more valuable presents, to the Pope; and all the principal churches and monasteries, where prayers had been offered for his expedition, shared largely in his bounties. But the most lasting memorial of it was the Abbey, which was built in accordance with his vow. Large revenues and singular privileges were conferred upon it. It was made a place of sanctuary and refuge, where even the felon and murderer might be beyond the reach of punishment; and to the Abbot of Battle Abbey was accorded the singular power of pardoning any malefactor, if he happened to come casually to the place of execution.

33. William having now been separated several months from Normandy, resolved to spend the Easter festival there, and re-embarked in the Mora with a large retinue, consisting of Edgar Atheling, Stigand the Primate, the Earls Edwin and Morcar, and others of the principal Saxon nobility, who

might be considered his best hostages, for the fidelity of his newly-acquired kingdom. Besides the pleasure of again beholding his beloved consort, and a family who were the objects of his warmest attachment, he had the pride of displaying to his Norman Court some of the spoils which he had brought over from England. These consisted of quantities of rich gold and silver plate, and of embroidered garments, wrought by the Saxon ladies, then so highly esteemed throughout Europe, that they were distinctively known by the term "Anglicum Opus." The long-haired and moustached English nobles attracted much attention, outvying each other, as they did, in giving costly entertainments, and in making such displays of their wealth as might please their new sovereign, or strike the strangers with wonder. Thus it was, that the whole summer was spent by William and his Court in a succession of gaieties and triumphant progresses through the towns and cities of Normandy, all participating in the joy and satisfaction of the monarch, whose glory was thus rendered more conspicuous to his native subjects.

34. Meanwhile the state of things in the English nation betokened that, in departing so soon from his conquered kingdom, William had not exercised a sufficient forethought of the dangers of his absence. The spirit of freedom was crushed for a time, but not extinguished, and the conqueror's absence was regarded as a fit opportunity to regain the ground which had been lost. A secret plot was formed for a general massacre of the Normans, at one and the same time throughout all England. By some means or other, intelligence to this effect reached William, who arrived in London on the 7th of December (A.D. 1067), before the plot was ripe for execution, as the malcontents believed they were sure of the King's not crossing the Channel in the winter season. But they overlooked the energetic character of the sovereign, who at once took most decisive steps for repressing the insurrection, and chastising his enemies. From that time, however, the King became still more jealous of his English subjects, and showed a fixed determination to rule them with a rod of iron. He imposed the tax called Danegelt, which had always been extremely odious to the people, and thus raised up a new spirit of revolt. The terror of his power at length drove many of the prin-

cipal men into exile, and among others Edgar, the legitimate heir to the throne, who fled into Scotland (A.D. 1068).

35. Several years of active warfare were thus occupied in securing the conquest which William had gained, and in extending it to the whole kingdom. His first campaign was in Devonshire, against a league formed by Harold's mother, Githa, and the citizens of Exeter, who at her instigation broke out into an open revolt. But although assisted by the Cornish men, they were constrained at last to yield, and Githa escaped with her treasures to Flanders (A.D. 1068). William's second campaign was to put down a rebellion in the north, headed by Edwin and Morcar, who were assisted by the Prince of Wales, and Malcolm, king of Scotland (A.D. 1069). This contest terminated in his favour; and after some hard-fought battles, and severe marches through several counties, as far as York, the Earls were placed at his mercy, and Malcolm agreed to a peace, in which he engaged to do homage for Cumberland. A third campaign led him again to York, to meet a formidable rising of the Saxons in favour of Edgar Atheling. Aided by the Danes, the insurgents took possession of the castle, and put the garrison, consisting of three thousand men, to the sword. But the Conqueror found the means to scatter or disunite all his foes, by force or intrigue; and on this occasion he gave way to his more violent impulses, by taking a cruel vengeance upon this disturbed part of his dominions. For this purpose he laid waste the whole of the fertile country between the Humber and the Tees, an extent of sixty miles. From York to Durham, not an inhabited village remained. Fire, slaughter, and desolation turned it into a wilderness for sixty years afterwards, and the lives of a hundred thousand persons are said to have been sacrificed by this stroke of barbarous and vindictive wrath, which no provocation could justify (A.D. 1070).

36. The fen country of Cambridgeshire and Lincoln was at this time up in arms under Hereward; and this seems to have been the only part of England, which for any considerable time held out against the Conqueror. Here his attacks were met by a skill and cunning which sorely baffled him. Over the marshes and fens, which opposed his progress more effectually than an armed force could have done, he endea-

voured to construct a safe and firm causeway. On one occasion, as he was superintending the advance of the Norman works in this quarter, his enemies succeeded in setting fire to the vast fields of reeds and flags, which had been dried up by the heat of a long summer. The King and his soldiers were speedily involved in a blaze and smoke, from which it was difficult to escape. Many perished in the attempt, but the Conqueror, having extricated himself, rode back to Cambridge Castle, believing, as it is said, that the Saxons were in league with the devil. At last, however, by much perseverance, he finished his causeway, two miles in length, through the swamps of the Isle of Ely, and, surrounding it with flat-bottomed boats, compelled his foes to surrender. Hereward escaped, but William, admiring his bravery, received him into his favour and restored to him his estate (A.D. 1071).

37. The greater part of England was by this time (A.D. 1071) reduced to submission. Almost all the estates of the Saxon nobility had become forfeited and were granted to the Normans. Many of the English bishops and clergy were degraded, and their places supplied by foreigners. Among the rest Stigand the primate was treated with great severity. He was deprived of his office, and cast into prison (A.D. 1070), during the remainder of his life—a proceeding which was intended to make room for a foreign prelate, it having become a maxim in this, and some of the following reigns, that no native of the island should ever be suffered to fill any dignity, either ecclesiastical, civil, or military.

In order still more effectually to establish the Norman power, and to perpetuate that authority by which the kingdom had been subdued, the feudal law was introduced—a system that had long prevailed in France and Normandy. The principle of this law was to render the whole population of the kingdom liable, at the sovereign's call, to perform service in war, at the order of his superior. The baron was not to obtain a right to his land, until he had appeared bare-headed and unarmed, in the presence of his royal master, to whom he took an oath, that he would be true to him against all his enemies. The knight or vassals paid the same duty and submission to their lord, as he himself had engaged to do to his sovereign. Each estate was subject to a contribution, at the mandate of the feudal chief, and the liege lord exacted of his inferior fines and services, on all

the profits of his property, not excepting even the marriage of his daughters. Each man of arms was expected to bring with him, at the monarch's call, a certain retinue of cavalry, archers, and spearmen, so that the whole male population became, in the strictest sense, liable to serve in the army of the prince. As the number of these men of arms was not less than 60,000, it may easily be understood how much this system tended to strengthen the powers of a sovereign who could rule the great barons of the kingdom, upon whom these knights or men at arms were dependent. Since none of the native English were admitted into the first rank, the few who retained their landed property were glad to be received into the second grade; and, under the powerful protection of the Norman, to load themselves and their posterity with this obligation of military tenure, and other burdens, for estates which they had received free from their ancestors.

38. The curfew, introduced a little before this time (A.D. 1068), has been supposed to have been one of the means which William the Conqueror adopted, for the more effectual subjugation of the people. We are told by some historians, that this ordinance which compelled all persons to extinguish, or cover over, all their lights and fires at eight o'clock in the evening, at the tolling of a bell, under penalty of death, was intended to prevent any nocturnal assemblies of the people for the purpose of discussing their grievances. But there is reason to believe that the custom was introduced into England at a much earlier period; for there was an ordinance of King Alfred, which enjoined the inhabitants of the city of Oxford, at the sound of the eight o'clock bell, to cover up their fires and go to bed. The couvre-feu was therefore of older origin than the Conqueror; but as he had previously established the custom in Normandy, to suppress nightly brawls and murders, and "to keep God's peace," it is probable that he restored the custom here with the same intent, and also to prevent accidents by fire, which were exceedingly common at a period when houses were for the most part built of wood, when there were no chimneys, and when whole towns were not unfrequently burnt down, from their extreme liability to such casualties.

39. One of the most pleasing characteristics in the life of William, was the sincere affection which he bore to the

Queen Matilda. In the year 1069 the departure of his consort and her children for Normandy threw a gloom over the nation, which had been in some measure relieved of its sadness by the presence of so amiable a princess, whose coronation, and its attendant festivities, for a while diverted and amused a heart-stricken people. The pageant which took place the previous year, was one far more splendid than that of the first inauguration of William to the royal dignity. For on this occasion he chose to be re-crowned at the same time, to render the ceremony still more imposing, and to do honour to the Queen. No such interruption as had formerly occurred, disturbed the pomp and grandeur of this second coronation (A.D. 1068). The graceful and majestic form of Matilda, and the number and beauty of her fine children, charmed the populace. At the grand banquet which followed, the champion of England made his appearance, for the first time in the attendant ceremonies. Marmion, the Norman knight of Fontenaye, rode into the hall in full armour, challenging to single combat all who should gainsay the rights of the royal personages to their crowns and dignities. The same year (A.D. 1068) the Queen gave birth to Henry surnamed Beauclerk, whom the English regarded with far more satisfaction than either of her former sons, Robert, Richard, and William Rufus, who had all been born in Normandy.

40. The domestic felicity which the King enjoyed in the company of his Queen and her children, was interrupted by the state of the Norman duchy, which required the presence of a ruler. And the frequent revolts in England did not allow the absence of a sovereign. There is reason to think that the temper of William was rendered more morose and vindictive by being obliged to part with Matilda and her family, after so short a stay; for, not long after her departure, he commenced that dreadful work of devastation in the north of England to which reference has already been made. The long-defended city of York having at this time been surrendered by Waltheof, that powerful Saxon chieftain was won over to the Norman cause for awhile, by the Conqueror's bestowing upon him in marriage the hand of his beautiful niece Judith. Waltheof's history forms one of the most affecting tragedies of this age. About four years after his marriage (A.D. 1074), he became a victim

to a plot in which he was implicated in some degree, with a number of Norman barons, who during the absence of William in Normandy had formed a conspiracy against him. The scheme was betrayed to the King by the wife of Waltheof, who had set her affections upon another; and although the Earl, quickly repenting of the part he had taken in the business, hastened to Normandy to make a disclosure of the whole design, yet his repentance was too late to be available for his safety. William, on his arrival in England, found that the vigilance and fidelity of Odo, the regent, Walter de Lacy, and others, had already defeated the designs of the conspirators, among whom were the Earl of Hertford, son of his chief favourite Fitzosbern, the Earl of Norfolk, and others of his principal nobles. He had, therefore, little left to do except to punish the traitors. But his severity was chiefly displayed towards Waltheof, whose broad lands were too tempting a prize to be relinquished on this opportunity. After a long suspense, he was tried, condemned, and beheaded, just without the gates of Winchester. He was the first English noble who died by the hands of the public executioner, and was deeply lamented by his own race, who entertained so strong an opinion of his innocence and sanctity that they ascribed a miraculous virtue to his relics. As for the infamous Judith, who had betrayed her husband, and exaggerated his guilt, she soon afterwards fell under the King's displeasure, and passed the rest of her life in a state of abandonment, and a prey to all the miseries of scorn and remorse.

41. From this time, the rule of the Conqueror was established without any further opposition throughout England. Arbitrary and oppressive as his government was, yet none had sufficient courage or ability to resist it with any hope of success; and every means was adopted, by which the chain might be more firmly riveted upon the nation. An attempt was made to suppress its native language, and the Norman dialect, which was a mixture of French and Dutch, was substituted in all the pleadings of the courts of justice. This measure was not only attended with great vexation and perplexity, but had a strong colouring of injustice, as Norman advocates could thus alone be employed, to plead for redress against Norman wrongs. The language of the conquerors was also now made the prevailing one in

all schools and colleges, being adopted as the medium for the conveyance of instruction; and no scholar of English birth was allowed to be admitted to any degree of church preferment. By these and other measures, the natives of the country were reduced to such meanness and poverty, that the English name became almost a term of reproach.

42. The Anglo-Saxon church could not but suffer grievously from such measures, and its bishops were peculiarly obnoxious to the Norman sovereign. They had stood forth, on more than one occasion, as champions for the rights and ancient laws of the people; and finding it impossible to awe or silence these patriots, he proceeded to deprive them of their benefices, and to plunder their churches and monasteries without scruple. If we may believe some of the ancient chroniclers, he applied to his own use all the chalices and rich shrines on which he could lay hands. Aldred, the Archbishop of York, who had twice put the crown upon his head, died (A.D. 1070), it is said, with grief and vexation, at seeing the manner in which he thus violated his coronation oath, and pronounced when dying a malediction upon him, for the tyranny with which he now ruled his English subjects. One of the worst consequences of his new regulations was to deprive them of that noblest of all legacies, which King Alfred had left them, a translation of the Holy Scriptures in their own tongue. But the system adopted by the Norman bishops, at the instance of William, of suppressing the use of books in the Saxon language, rendered the Book of God for sometime almost a dead letter to the far larger part of the nation.

43. The Primate who now ruled the church in the room of Stigand was Lanfranc, who, although in many respects his superior, being a great patron and restorer of the learning of his day, could not be considered as a man who was much in advance of his age. Like the pious men of this period he was devoted to a system of religion, which was becoming more and more encumbered with the superstitions engrafted upon it by the Roman church. One of the objects which he earnestly laboured to effect, was the enforcement of the rule of single life upon all the clergy. He was also an exceedingly zealous promoter of the doctrine of Transubstantiation, which up to this period had scarcely been heard of in this island. Although, however, he did but

little to restrain the King from any of his more violent purposes, yet he exerted himself zealously and advantageously for the church, and the nation, on more than on one occasion. "When William's half-brother, Bishop Odo, usurped and annexed to his own possessions five-and-twenty manors belonging to the church of Canterbury, Lanfranc appealed to the laws, and, after a public trial on Pennenden Heath, recovered them, to the great joy and benefit of the tenants, who thus continued under the easiest and most liberal of all tenures." William had that high respect for the integrity of his Archbishop, that when he went beyond the sea, he left him Lord Chief Justice, or Justiciary of the whole kingdom. The favour which the King bestowed upon him, was not the result of flattery, or servile submission to the King's will. An anecdote is told which fully illustrates this. "One day when a minstrel exclaimed, as William sat at table in his court, in a dress resplendent with gold and jewels, that he beheld a visible God, Lanfranc called upon the King not to permit such blasphemous adulation, and the flatterer accordingly was punished with stripes, instead of receiving the reward which he expected."

Other circumstances may be mentioned to the honour of this prelate, whose history in some degree throws light upon the conduct of William, and shows that this monarch was much under his influence, in all affairs which did not interfere with his system of government. Besides rebuilding Canterbury Cathedral with stone from Caen, and founding two hospitals in that city, he bestowed in alms 500*l.* annually, a sum fully equal to twelve times that amount in our days. During his primacy no promotion in the church was to be obtained by purchase; neither was any unfit person raised to be a bishop. The trade which had been carried on in slaves, who were sold to Ireland, was now, through the same wise and pious influence, prohibited. Wulstan, bishop of Worcester, whom William had deprived of his bishopric on the alleged plea of insufficiency of learning, and ignorance of the French tongue, had already protested against this iniquitous traffic; but the King did not regard his remonstrances, and would hardly have relinquished the great profit which he derived from it, if Lanfranc had not also raised his voice against it, and possessed some powerful means of influencing the mind of his despotic sovereign.

44. But although William, in these instances, yielded to the wishes of a prelate for whom he entertained a high regard, he was not disposed to admit of any authority on the part of the church, when it interfered with his own, or asserted a superiority over it. Gregory the Eighth, the memorable Hildebrand, whose maxim it was, that kings who presumed to disobey the mandates of the Holy See were to be cut off from the church, and to forfeit their dignities, was, in this respect, no match for the Norman sovereign of England. When this Pope sent to him, demanding that he should do homage to him for his newly-acquired kingdom, and take care to send him the tribute money, designated as Peter-pence, which had been neglected, William boldly replied, that although he would remit the arrears of money thus due to the Roman see, he would not perform any act of fealty for his crown, since none of the kings of England had ever done so before him, and that he had himself never promised such homage. So far from abating anything of his rights, even to this lordly and proud Pontiff, he made the laws of the land more stringent than they had ever been, as it regarded the Pope and the clergy. He forbade the latter to leave the kingdom, to acknowledge a Pope, or to excommunicate a noble; or even to receive letters from Rome, without his own express commission or approval (A.D. 1076–1078).

45. These transactions sufficiently marked the conduct of William as a monarch. There was one of a different kind, which showed his determinate and self-willed character, as to his pleasures. He was extremely fond of hunting, and as the usual place of his residence was near Winchester, he laid waste the country of Hampshire, for an extent of thirty miles, to convert it into a forest*. The inhabitants were expelled from this district; and even churches and convents were not spared. This was made strictly a royal chace; and neither in this nor in any of his forests, could his subjects hunt, without being exposed to the severest penalties. The killing of a boar, or even a hare, subjected the culprit to the loss of his eyes; and this at a time when even the murder of a man might be atoned for by the payment of a moderate fine.

* About A.D. 1082. There is reason, however, to think that this district was never very thickly peopled.

46. There was one undertaking for which it seems questionable whether the conduct of William deserves praise or blame. He caused a survey to be made of all the lands in the kingdom, and a number of particulars to be collected, respecting the property in each district. This record has been preserved to the present time in what is called the Domesday book (A.D. 1081); and it is a valuable register, as serving to illustrate many curious matters, in the ancient state of England. The labour of it occupied six years. Alfred had previously made a similar survey, but probably with a different motive. If the object of William had been to ascertain the exact wealth of the kingdom, for the purpose of benefiting his subjects, such a work must have been worthy of the highest praise. But we can hardly entertain a doubt that his motive was in this instance to discover what amount of revenue he might exact from the country. He designed to realize a land tax, and he accordingly laid an impost of six shillings upon every hide of land*. One of our old historians observes, that when this survey was finished, it was laid up in the Exchequer or public treasury, that it might be consulted on any occasion when it was required to know of how much more wool the English flocks might be fleeced. By the aid of this register, William was enabled to raise his royal revenue to four hundred thousand pounds per annum yearly, a sum which has been computed to equal five millions and upwards of our present money. Taking also into account his other perquisites from fines and forfeitures, his income was probably much greater; so that no king of England was ever more opulent, or had a larger revenue at command to gratify his utmost wishes.

47. During the last ten years of his reign, William spent much of his time in Normandy. The insurrection of his Norman barons in the year 1074 made it necessary that he should pursue one of the principal of them, Ralph de Guader, into his own territories, whither he had taken refuge. This noble proved to be a more powerful antagonist than any of his accomplices. His cause was espoused by the young Duke of Bretagne, Allan Fergeant, and by the King of France. A powerful army came to the assistance of the besieged Earl in the city of Dol. William on this occasion

* The hide was equal to 120 acres.

scarcely maintained his title of the Conqueror. He was obliged to raise the siege and abandon his tents and baggage, to the value of fifteen thousand pounds. In this mortifying position he succeeded, however, in effecting by diplomacy what he had failed to do by battle. A pacific treaty was proposed and agreed to, which was concluded by a marriage between Alan and his daughter Constance. The nuptials were celebrated with great pomp, and the bride's dowry was the county of Chester, once the possession of the Earl Edwin. That nobleman had been affianced to another daughter of William. But his promised bride being afterwards withheld from him, he had taken part in an insurrection, and was on his way to Scotland after the discovery and defeat of the plot. During this journey he was basely betrayed into an ambush by three brothers, in whom he had confided; and here he was attacked by a large party of Normans, by whom he was slain, with twenty of his followers. His death was passionately bewailed by the English, and the Conqueror is said to have shed tears when the head of the young Saxon with its long flowing hair was presented to him by the traitors. To his honour it is related that, instead of conferring upon them the expected reward of this murder, he sentenced them to perpetual exile (A.D. 1071).

48. The remaining events in the life of William chiefly refer to his domestic and personal affairs in Normandy, rather than in England. One exception must be made in respect to the trial of his uterine brother, Bishop Odo, Earl of Kent, who possessed the chief management of English affairs in the absence of the sovereign. Odo seems to have inherited no small portion of the same ambitious spirit which characterized his relative. But his ambition at this period regarded the popedom. Some Italian astrologers had, by their predictions, fostered the notion that he was destined to succeed the reigning Pope, and that money only was wanting to put him in possession of this dignity as soon as it should be vacant. To forward, therefore, his grand project, Odo racked his English vassals for money, and raised himself a strong party among the Norman chiefs, who, forgetting their feudal duty to William, had agreed to accompany the Bishop to Rome. But the dream of the aspiring prelate was soon put an end to, by the sudden arrival of his impetuous brother from Normandy. Landing

in the Isle of Wight, he there surprised Odo, who, with his treasures, was just about to depart on his ill-concerted expedition (A.D. 1082). Accusing him of his designs and extortions, and, above all, of attempting to carry out of the kingdom the warriors whose presence was necessary to its safety, he demanded of these barons what such a brother deserved? The latter dared not to reply, and upon being ordered to arrest him, not one of them would venture (such was their awe of his power and his office) to obey the command. When none of them moved hand or foot towards the culprit, "Then will I do it," said the King himself, stepping forward and seizing the Bishop by his robes. "I am a clerk—a priest and a bishop," cried Odo, "and the Pope alone has the right of judging me!" But William, without losing his hold, replied, "I do not arrest thee as Bishop of Bayeux, but as Earl of Kent." Upon this Odo submitted, and was forthwith sent to Normandy, where he was confined in a strong castle, not receiving his liberation, until William lay upon his death-bed. The Pope remonstrated against this act, and threatened the King, but to no purpose—a proof that William had but little reverence for these papal anathemas, which had filled all the rest of the sovereigns of Europe with dismay.

49. When the Conqueror had, however, subdued all his other enemies, he found that he had still more dangerous foes among those of his own household. His son Robert, through an undue partiality of Matilda for her first-born, and from the power with which he had been entrusted in the government of the duchy during his father's absence, began to manifest too much of the temper of a spoiled child. He complained of the affronts that had been offered to him by his younger brothers, and of his father not having fulfilled his promise to bestow upon him the duchies of Normandy and Maine. On one occasion he enforced these complaints with much boldness, in the presence of William, who is said to have made him this characteristic reply:—

"It is not my custom to strip till I go to bed—and as long as I live, I will not deprive myself of my native realm, neither will I divide it with another, for it is written in the holy evangelists, 'Every kingdom that is divided against itself shall become desolate.' I won England by mine own good sword: the Vicars of Christ placed the diadem of its

ancient kings upon mine head; and I swear that all the world combined shall not compel me to delegate my power to another; neither is it to be borne that he who owes his existence to me, should aspire to be my rival in mine own dominions."

50. Upon hearing this haughty declaration, Robert angrily left his father's court, and began to play the part of a second Absalom, and with some of the same success. Supported by the hostile power of France, and by a disaffected portion of William's subjects, he at length took up arms against his parent and sovereign, who soon perceived that he had greatly underrated the military talents of his heir, and that he possessed all the martial prowess of his race. He, therefore, arrayed his forces, and marched against his rebellious son. A furious battle was fought in the plain of Archembraye (A.D. 1077), near the Castle of Gerberg. The cavalry commanded by Robert fell with so much impetuosity upon the ranks which his father commanded that they were thrown into disorder. Both of these warriors, armed as knights, met together on the field, and encountered each other. Robert, unconscious who the champion was against whom he tilted, ran his father through the arm with his lance, and unhorsed him. Transported with rage at the overthrow (for William had never yet been overcome in single combat, and was one of the strongest men of his age), he called out so loudly and angrily for rescue, that Robert at once knew him. Quickly alighting, he raised him from the ground, and with much tenderness entreated forgiveness for the injury he had unknowingly inflicted; then placing him upon his own horse he led him out of the field, and brought him to a place of safety. At first, William uttered nothing but maledictions, and his resentment was too violent for some time to give way to any emotion of paternal forgiveness. But his son, although he remained master of the field, was conscience-stricken, and William, when the first transport of passion was over, yielded to his earnest pleadings, seconded by those of his mother, Matilda, and other common friends. A reconciliation was thus brought about, which was probably forwarded by the generosity of Robert's behaviour in the action. He repaired to Rouen with only three servants, and was there graciously received by both his parents, with their usual kindness and affection. The

King's wrath was so entirely subdued that he took Robert with him on his return to England. The following year (A.D. 1078), he was commissioned to chastise the Scottish monarch, Malcolm, for violating his treaty of peace; but nothing more remarkable occurred during this campaign than that of his founding the town of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

51. Throughout the remainder of the life of the Conqueror, we hear but little more of Prince Robert, to whom his father gave the nickname of Courthose, or Shortstocking, on account of the lowness of his stature. His history abounds with remarkable contrasts, showing the insecurity of fortune. He joined the Crusaders, under Godfrey of Boulogne, and mortgaged the dukedom of Normandy, left him by his father, to his brother William, for six thousand six hundred and sixty pounds of silver. At the taking of the Holy City, A.D. 1099, he was elected King of Jerusalem, but hearing of the death of William Rufus, he hurried away to England with the idea of being his successor. Henry, his younger brother, had, however, already possessed himself of the kingdom, and speedily stripped Robert also of his dukedoms. Defeating him at Tinchebray (A.D. 1106), he imprisoned him in Cardiff Castle, where he spent a weary captivity of twenty-eight years before his death (A.D. 1134), having earned for himself the title of the "Unready," from the circumstance of his never being in time, or possessing skill enough, to take advantage of the great opportunities which were afforded him of improving his fortune.

52. In the year 1083, William was doomed to feel the insufficiency of his greatness to secure to him the possession of domestic happiness. He lost his royal consort Matilda, whom he had loved with a constancy and affection but rarely seen in the history of kings. She had been Duchess of Normandy more than thirty-one years, and Queen of England seventeen. William was in England when he heard of her declining health, and hastened over to Caen, but only in time to receive her last farewell. Although some crimes have been laid to her charge, which, if true, prove her to have been of a vindictive disposition, there is no blot in her history as a good queen or faithful wife. William's affection and esteem for her, notwithstanding that

she had supplied his rebellious son with too much silver and gold, even at a time when he was meditating rebellion against his father, must have been founded upon the highest sense of her merits. He would permit no one to censure her conduct in his presence. She was the love of his youth, the solace of his meridian hours of life, and preserved the same empire over his heart to the last hour of her life. The increasing dissensions among her sons, could not, however, but press heavily upon her mind, and these domestic anxieties are supposed to have brought on that illness which at last proved fatal.

53. The most remarkable circumstance by which her name will be always connected with English history, was the performance of the Bayeux Tapestry; a most ingenious and curious work, in which is still preserved a pictorial representation of her husband's great exploits, from Harold's first landing in Normandy, to his fall at Hastings. This most important historical monument is still exhibited in the Town Hall at Bayeux, where it is called the Duke of Normandy's Toilette, or great cloth. A piece of canvas is shown embroidered in worsted, being about nineteen inches in breath, and upwards of sixty-seven yards long. It is mounted on a roller, which, in unwinding, displays in regular order the series of events preparatory to, and connected with, the Norman conquest. Hundreds of figures of men, horses, birds, beasts, trees, houses, castles, and churches, are here seen executed in suitable colours, with names and inscriptions over them to elucidate the story. A dwarf artist, named Turold, is said to have traced on the canvas the proper outlines and colours; and Matilda was probably assisted in this work by many of her Norman ladies, as well as by some of the conquered daughters of a land already celebrated for the skill of its females in the arts of embroidery*.

54. After the death of his beloved Queen, William, who

* This work was probably executed about A.D. 1066–1088. It could not have been executed, as some contend, in the time of Henry the First, for the men then wore long hair, but in the Bayeux Tapestry, all the Normans are represented having not only their lips shaven, but nearly the whole of their heads, which gave rise to the report of Harold's spies, that the Normans were an army of priests. See an article on the subject in the Archæologia, vol. xix. art. 24.

had testified by his excessive grief how much he deplored her loss, returned to England for a short time, but his temper became more severe and irritable. The historians of the period assert that Matilda, as long as she lived, exercised her influence over the mind of her lord for the mitigation of the sufferings of the English people, and that after her death he became more tyrannical. Three years subsequent to this event he passed again into Normandy, taking with him Edgar Atheling, to whom he freely granted a permission to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in company with his son Robert. Prince Edgar, since the year 1074, when he went to Normandy to make his submission to the Conqueror, had been treated with kindness, and pensioned with a daily allowance of a pound of silver. He was deserving of some respect, as the last descendant in the male line of the Saxon kings, having been the grandson of Edmund Ironside, and therefore the nephew of Edward the Confessor. William's interest was evidently to attach to himself by gratitude one who might be, at any time, a dangerous competitor for the English crown. But it argues that there was something noble as well as crafty in the disposition of the Norman sovereign, for many sovereigns (as we may learn from the pages of English history) would have thought it necessary to remove, by some violent means, an object that might be a future stumbling-block in their path. Edgar's talents, it is true, were not of a very high order, and he was therefore a person so much the less dangerous. With the more ambitious and ill-fated Robert he was made a prisoner at Tinchebray, having followed him in all his fortunes. Henry, however, gave him his liberty, and settled a small pension upon him, and he lived to a good old age in England, quite neglected and forgotten. He possessed great personal bravery, and was at one time high in the affections of the English, as being, in their estimation, the only rightful inheritor of a title to the throne of their ancient monarchs. Had his ambition or his talents been equal to such a throne, it is scarcely possible that he would have been suffered, during the unpopular and violent reigns of the two sons of William, to retire into a scene of oblivion, or to have gone down to his grave in peace.

55. The circumstance which again brought William into Normandy was a contest in which he had become embroiled

with Philip, king of France, respecting the possession of the city of Mantes, and the country of the Vexin, one of the departments, known at present as the Isle of France. Shortly after his arrival in Normandy, the King of England, who had grown excessively corpulent, fell sick, and was confined to his bed, upon which Philip said jokingly to some of his courtiers, "That his cousin William was a long time lying in, but no doubt there would be a fine churching after his delivery." This jest having reached the ears of William, he swore one of his terrible oaths that he would be churched in Notre Dame, the cathedral of Paris, and set all France in a blaze at his *churching;* alluding to the custom of those times, for women on such occasions to carry lighted tapers in their hands, and present them on the altar. As soon as he could leave his sick bed he marched into the country of the Vexin with a large army, and, having ravaged it in the fiercest and most cruel manner, he fell upon the city of Mantes, which having taken, he ordered it, in pursuance of his vow, to be set on fire. The barbarous decree was as barbarously executed; but an avenging Providence was now at hand to stop the tyrant's career, and to make his blind fury the instrument of his own destruction. While he was superintending this savage work, and when it was nearly completed, not even a house or cottage nor even a church or monastery being spared, as he was riding round the ruins, his war-horse happened to set his fore-feet upon some of the hot embers or cinders, and immediately swerved and plunged so violently, as to throw his heavy and corpulent rider against the high pommel of the saddle. The King was thus seriously bruised, and, dismounting from his charger in great pain, never more set foot in stirrup. He was compelled to be carried slowly in a litter to Rouen, and again laid in his bed, where he began to experience some of the stings of conscience for the violent deed in which he had lately been engaged, and for the various oppressions and crimes of which he had been guilty during a long reign. Unable to bear the noise and bustle of a great city, he was carried, at his own request, to the monastery of St. Gervas, just outside the city walls, and was afterwards removed to Hermentrude, a pleasant village still further from Rouen, where he could still more quietly prepare for death.

56. In the prospect of this event he lingered about six

weeks, all the while expressing the most bitter remorse for the injuries he had done to individuals, and for the blood he had shed in England, especially for the desolation and woe he had caused in Hampshire by planting the New Forest, protesting that, having so misused that fair and beautiful land, he dared not appoint a successor to it, but left the disposal of it in the hands of God, desiring fervently, however, that his son William, for whom he expressed great affection, might obtain it. This wish he also strongly intimated in a letter to Lanfranc, in which he penitently acknowledged the errors of his past life. To his third son, Henry, he prophetically declared, that though he left him only five thousand pounds of silver, and the possessions of his mother, Matilda, he would one day surpass his brothers in opulence and in power. To Robert, his eldest son, he bequeathed the duchies of Normandy and Maine, giving vent, however, to some bitterness of feeling in regard to his conduct since the death of his mother, and foretelling that his reign would be an unhappy one, and that he would be severely punished for his unnatural conduct. He ordered, moreover, that the Earl Morcar and others who were in confinement should now be liberated. Among the rest who profited by this act of grace was Ulnoth, the brother of Harold, who had remained in captivity from his childhood, having been given as an hostage by Earl Godwin to Edward the Confessor. These, with all others of the Saxon race who had been detained in the Norman prisons, were now set at large. Even his brother Odo was not forgotten at this time, although his pardon was the last and most reluctantly granted. Besides these signs of true penitence, the dying monarch endeavoured to give proofs of his willingness to make what reparation he could, by ordering large sums of money to be distributed to the poor, and to be expended on the rebuilding of monasteries and churches, especially of those which had been recently burnt by his orders respecting Mantes.

57. On the 9th of September, 1087, a few days after he had settled all his temporal affairs, William fell into a stupor, from which he was aroused about sunrise by hearing the sound of the great bell of St. Gervas, ringing the hour of Prime. He enquired what it meant. One of his attendants replying, that it was the signal of the early morning prayer

in the church of St. Mary, he lifted his eyes to Heaven, and spreading abroad his hands, exclaimed, "I commend myself to that blessed Lady Mary the mother of God, that she, by her holy intercession, may reconcile me to her most dear son, our Lord Jesus Christ."

With these words on his lips, so expressive of true devotion, though mingled with the superstition belonging to his age, expired the Norman Conqueror of England, and the great ancestor of our present line of sovereigns, in the sixty-fourth year of his life, having reigned nearly fifty-six years in his own duchy, and twenty-one in the realm which he had obtained by his sword.

58. Of the vanity of all human greatness, nothing can supply a more powerful illustration than the scenes preceding the death of William, and those subsequent to this event. This mighty Conqueror had none of his family near him, to console his last moments. Robert was in Germany. William was on his voyage to England. Henry was absent on some self-interested business. Scarcely had their once victorious father breathed his last, when the servants of the household began to plunder the mansion where he lay of all the money, plate, and other valuables that they could secure. They even stripped the person of the dead sovereign, and left his body lying naked on the floor. All were in consternation, or so much busied on their own affairs, that the corpse of the king was thus left entirely neglected for some hours. A poor country knight, named Harlewin, who is supposed to have married the king's mother Arlotta, was the only person found willing to make the necessary arrangements for his burial, which he did at his own cost. It was ordered by the Archbishop of Rouen, that William should be interred within the walls of his own royal foundation at Caen. At the Abbey of St. Stephen, therefore, the royal corpse, after being conveyed in a cart to the banks of the Seine, and from thence in a barge down the river, was met by Henry and the monks. But the funeral rites had scarcely commenced, when an alarm of fire in the cloisters frightened away all the monks, and the ceremony was suspended until this danger was over. Presently a new disturbance arose, for when all things were ready for the interment, Anselm Fitz-Arthur, a Norman gentleman, stood forth and declared that the dead Duke,

when he built the Abbey, had despoiled him of this ground, which was once the site of his father's house. "I therefore charge ye all," said he, "as ye will answer it at the great and dreadful day of judgment, that ye lay not the body of the despoiler on the hearth of my father." Henry, who could not deny the justness of this bold appeal, at once examined and admitted the claim of Fitz-Arthur, who consented to receive one hundred pounds of silver as a compensation. Sixty shillings of earnest money, for the occupation of the seven feet of earth required as the last abode of the Conqueror, were given and received on either side of the grave, and then the obsequies were again suffered to proceed. The body, wrapped up in red taffeta, was lowered into the walled grave beneath, without a coffin, and the stone cover or lid was finally placed over it. So singular a chapter of accidents was, perhaps, never witnessed at the interment of a mighty sovereign, dying, as he did, in the full exercise of his power.

59. William of Normandy was one of the most remarkable men of his age, considered only with reference to his personal qualities. He possessed almost Herculean strength; and, like another Ulysses, none but himself could bend his bow. It might be said of him as of Saul, the first king of Israel, "When he stood among the people he was higher than any of them, from his shoulders and upwards." His countenance was a majestic one—his forehead high and bold—his aspect stern and commanding. There were times, however, when he could assume an expression of sweetness in his looks and manner, that was extremely captivating. But his wrath was terrible, and none could bear the flash of his eye in anger. His eloquence was powerful and persuasive; and his habits were singularly temperate for those of a sovereign. In his household also he observed the strictest economy, but sometimes he delighted to display his magnificence, and three times in a year he wore his crown—at Christmas, at Easter, and at Whitsuntide.

60. It is to be regretted that a sovereign possessed of many great and princely qualities, should have been the victim of an ambition which too often rendered him deaf to the voice of reason, compassion and religion. Although it can scarcely be doubted, that his vigorous administration

and martial prowess laid the foundation of our national greatness upon a broader basis of glory than could have been gained by the perpetuation of the line of the Saxon monarchs, yet this advantage was procured by means which no schemes of policy or ambition could justify;—and at a greater expense of bloodshed and misery than had ever yet attended the footsteps of any foreign invader on the English soil. His life, upon the whole, must be considered as an example shewing the pernicious effects of a reckless and inordinate love of power and conquest. It will be read as an illustration of the truth of the following picture which the celebrated French preacher, Massillon, held up to the view of Louis the Fourteenth—the "Grande Monarque," as he was styled, of the 17th century:—"If the poison of ambition reach and infect the heart of the prince; if the sovereign, forgetting that he is the protector of the public tranquillity, prefer his own glory to the love and to the safety of his people; if he would rather subdue provinces, than reign in their hearts; if it appear to him more glorious to be the destroyer of his neighbours, than to be the father of his people; if the voice of grief and desolation be the only sound that attends his victories; if he use that power which is only given him for the happiness of those he governs, to promote his own passions and interest: in a word, if he be a king solely to spread misery, and, like the monarch of Babylon, erect his idol on the wreck of nations .... his glory will ever be steeped in blood. Some insane panegyrists may chant his victories; but the provinces, the towns, the villages, will weep. Superb monuments may be erected to eternize his conquests—but the lasting monuments that will survive him, will be mournful monuments that will immortalise his folly and his vanity; he will have passed like a torrent that destroys, not like a majestic river, spreading joy and abundance; his name will be inscribed in the annals of posterity among conquerors, but never among good kings; the history of his reign will be recollected only to revive the evil he has done mankind."

61. The fate that attended the last obsequies of the hero whose life has just been described, seems to have been prophetic of the indignity which was to be offered to his remains several centuries after they had been deposited in the grave. In the year 1542 the Bishop of Bayeux,

prompted by a desire to behold the body of this great sovereign, opened his tomb. It appeared as entire as when it was first buried, and was that of a man exceeding in stature the tallest persons then known. Forty years afterwards, when the Calvinists, under Chastillon, took Caen, a party of rapacious soldiers forced open the tomb in search of treasure, but finding nothing besides the bones of William, they threw them about the church in great derision. Whether the stately monument which William Rufus erected to his father, and which was adorned with gold, silver, and precious gems, and richly sculptured, was then standing, seems very doubtful. Exactly a century after the body of the Conqueror had been thus unceremoniously treated by these fanatics, the monks of St. Stephen, having collected together what had been yet preserved of the bones of their royal patron, built a plain altar-shaped tomb over them, in the spot where the original monument had stood. But even that simple memorial was swept away by the barbarians of the French Revolution. The only monument that now remains to attest the dignity of William duke of Normandy —the proud despotic Conqueror of England—is a mutilated headless equestrian statue, placed against one of the external pillars of the church.

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62. Of the family of the Conqueror something more may be here related, in agreement with the plan which has been pursued in other parts of this work. As a sovereign, William was an eminent example of chastity in a dissolute age. And as the prevalence of an opposite vice has often in the history of kings, even more strikingly, perhaps, than in that of private persons, been followed by a rapid extinction of their name and posterity, it may be useful to observe what were the results of that conjugal fidelity which was one of the brightest spots in the lives of William and Matilda. Their offspring was rather a numerous one; and though not exempt from those casualties which are incident to human nature in every rank and age, they must be considered upon the whole as a prosperous race, the sovereignty of England having continued to reside in some of the descendants of this family down to the present time, and with a still increasing measure of glory.

63. The royal progeny of the founder of the Norman race of princes consisted of four sons and six daughters. The eldest of the princesses was Cecilia or Cicely, who first took the veil as a nun in the Abbey of Fescamp, and became afterwards Abbess of the nunnery of the Holy Trinity at Caen, founded by her mother, Matilda. In this station she survived most of the members of her family, being still living in the reign of Henry the First.

Constance, the second daughter, became the wife of Alan Fergent, earl of Brittany, but died without issue.

Of Agatha we are told, by a contemporary writer, that she had been affianced to Harold, and was, after his death, demanded of her father in marriage by Alphonsus, king of Gallicia, but manifested the greatest repugnance to this alliance. There is reason to believe that she had become strongly attached to Edwin, the earl Morcar, and that her father had promised him that this daughter should be his bride. The breach of the promise, from some unexplained cause, produced a revolt on the part of Edwin which led to his untimely death *. The mind of this princess was so strongly set against another marriage, and with a foreign monarch whom she had not seen, that she earnestly prayed (as the historian relates) that the Most High would rather take her to Himself than allow her ever to be transported into Spain—a petition which was not offered in vain, as she died on her journey towards the kingdom of Gallicia. God granted her, the old annalist observes, a virgin death; and she had been so devoted to religious exercises that, after her decease, it was discovered her knees had become as hard as horn with constantly kneeling.

Adela, or Adelicia, generally classed as the fourth daughter of William, was married to Stephen, earl of Blois. She was a learned woman, and possessed some of the great abilities of her renowned sire. Of her four sons, the most conspicuous in history was Stephen, who succeeded to the English throne after the death of Henry the First. Upon the death of her husband she became a nun, and took the veil at Marcigny.

Adelaide, or Adeliza, the fifth of these daughters, was also a nun. It was this princess, according to some of the

* See Section 47.

historians, to whom Harold was contracted on his visit to Normandy; but there is more reason to believe that this alliance was designed for Agatha, an elder daughter.

The sixth and youngest of the female descendants of William and Matilda was Gundred, married to Earl Warren, one of the most powerful and wealthy of the Norman nobles, who was the first earl of Surrey, in England. From this union sprung a long and mighty line of earls bearing the same name.

64. Of the four sons of the Conqueror, the fortunes of Robert the elder have been already sketched in the course of the preceding history *. The second son, Richard, died in England, in the lifetime of his parents, and in the flower of his youth. He is said to have been a prince of great promise and of an amiable disposition. William, surnamed Rufus or Rous, from the colour of his hair, or from the ruddiness of his complexion, and called by the Saxon historians the Red King, succeeded to his father's name and honours at his death. But he was a prince who possessed few of his good qualities, and more than all of his bad ones. He owed his elevation chiefly to Lanfranc and to the influence of the church; but soon after the death of that prelate he became a grievous oppressor, despoiling the clergy of their lands without scruple, retaining in his hands the revenues of the see of Canterbury and of several other vacant bishoprics. To acquire the dukedom of Normandy, which his brother Robert had mortgaged to him for ten thousand marks, he extorted money by the most violent means from his subjects of all ranks. The acquirement of this territory became, however, only a new source of annoyance and expense to his English subjects, as the Normans could only be kept in subjection by a continued waste of blood and treasure. After a tyrannical and licentious reign, which lasted scarcely thirteen years, he met with a violent death by one of those casualties which, to a reflective mind, form the most remarkable evidences of the existence of an overruling Providence. The New Forest, which had been the work of his father, who had sacrificed to an inordinate love of the pleasures of the chace every other consideration, laying waste a large tract of country for this purpose, expelling the inhabitants from their homes, seizing their property, demolishing

* See Section 51.

churches and convents, and making the sufferers no compensation for the injuries thus sustained, was to be the scene of that divine retribution, by which the sins of the fathers are sometimes permitted to be visited on their children. Hunting in this place with Walter Tyrrel, a French gentleman and favourite, whom Rufus familiarly called Wat de Poix, from the name of his estates in Picardy, he was there slain by a random arrow (as it is said), which Tyrrel let fly at a stag, but which glancing from a tree against which it had struck, pierced the breast of the King, and instantly occasioned his death. So unpopular was this sovereign that, according to some accounts, Tyrrel is accused of having been intentionally the cause of his death. But as he himself denied the truth of this accusation, long after it could have done him any harm if he had admitted it, we may reasonably believe his solemn denial; and attribute the report that he had thus sought to avenge the wrongs of a suffering people to the opinion generally entertained of the just deserts of a monarch, the termination of whose reign by any means appeared to be a national blessing.

65. Henry, the fourth son of the Conqueror, was now the only one of his descendants upon whom the crown of England could justly descend, as William had died without an heir, and Robert, the oldest brother, had virtually abandoned all pretensions to this inheritance, by marching with the army of the Crusaders to take possession of the Holy City. This, which was one of the greatest enterprises of the age, and to accomplish which all Europe had been aroused under the preaching of Peter, the hermit of Picardy, diverted the attention of Robert from those objects of ambition that might more naturally have engaged his talents as a warrior and a prince. He enlisted in it with so much ardour and enthusiasm, that he not only yielded to William the quiet possession of the realm of England, but mortgaged to him his hereditary dukedom. Hearing, however, of his untimely death, just as the diadem of Jerusalem was placed within his grasp, he instantly relinquished it, for one which was still more tempting, and returned hastily from the Holy Land, bringing with him the beautiful Sibilla, daughter of the Count of Couversana, in Italy, whom he had just married. By the intervention of Anselm, the successor of

Lanfranc in the see of Canterbury, an amicable arrangement was entered into between the two brothers. It was agreed that Henry should pay to Robert an annual pension, and that on the demise of either of them, the dominions each had possessed should belong to the survivor. But this treaty was soon broken; and the disputes between these rivals for power terminated at length in the battle of Tinchebray, which for ever deprived Robert of his liberty.

By the marriage which has just been referred to, Robert had a son, named in history William Clito, who, when he grew up, courageously endeavoured to vindicate his father's rights, but with small success. He died at the early age of sixteen years, in consequence of a slight wound in the thumb which he received in disarming a mutinous soldier of his lance (A.D. 1128).

66. From this period (A.D. 1100), Henry, therefore, became the undisturbed possessor of that sovereignty in England and Normandy, which his father on his death-bed predicted would be his lot. This prince, who gained the title of Beauclerk, or the fine scholar, by his scholastic learning and his patronage of learned men, turned some of his superior knowledge to good account by becoming in some respects a better statesman than either of his predecessors. Of this he gave the best proof by marrying the daughter of Malcolm, king of Scotland. Her mother Matilda was the sister of Edgar Atheling, and a queen of the blood of Alfred. The allegiance which the Norman Conqueror, and his still more despotic successor, had only been able to obtain from the Saxons by terror and compulsion, and which they had often thrown off in spite of all the severe penalties attending rebellion, was now faithfully and willingly bestowed upon a sovereign, who thus identified himself in heart and interest with the English people. It should not be forgotten, however, that the Norman sovereigns were far from being aliens in blood with that race whom they had conquered; for Henry, as well as his Saxon queen, was descended in the eighth generation from the same lineage, through the marriage of Elstrith, the daughter of Alfred, with an earl of Flanders, who was thus his maternal ancestor.

67. From this union, which rendered the blending of the two races more complete and apparent, he derived an heir, William the Atheling, upon whom his best hopes were fixed,

but who was not destined to continue his line. This young prince unfortunately perished in returning from Normandy to England; the vessel in which he sailed, called the White Ship, having struck upon a rock—a catastrophe which was the more to be regretted, as it seemed the result of the intoxicated condition of the ship's crew, whom the prince had incautiously regaled with too much wine.

Henry had married his only other surviving child Matilda to Henry the Fifth, emperor of Germany, who left her a widow in her twenty-fourth year. Upon her rested all the father's prospects of securing the succession in his family. With this object in view he united her to Geoffrey Plantagenet, the eldest son of the Earl of Anjou. From this union descended Henry the Second, first monarch of this illustrious house of the Plantaganets. On the death of Stephen, who usurped the crown of his uncle, and continued, notwithstanding a fierce civil war raised against him by Matilda and her party, to wear it for nineteen years, or from A.D. 1135 to 1189, this inheritance of greatness was again restored to the direct successors of William the Conqueror. The line of this mighty Norman prince has thus been nobly sustained through some of its branches to the present day; and its honours have been at length transmitted to Queen VICTORIA, who now, seated on the throne of Great Britain, unites, with the glory of an uninterrupted line of illustrious ancestors, an extent of power and dominion that has no parallel in any former age of history.

SUMMARY OF ERA THE TWELFTH.

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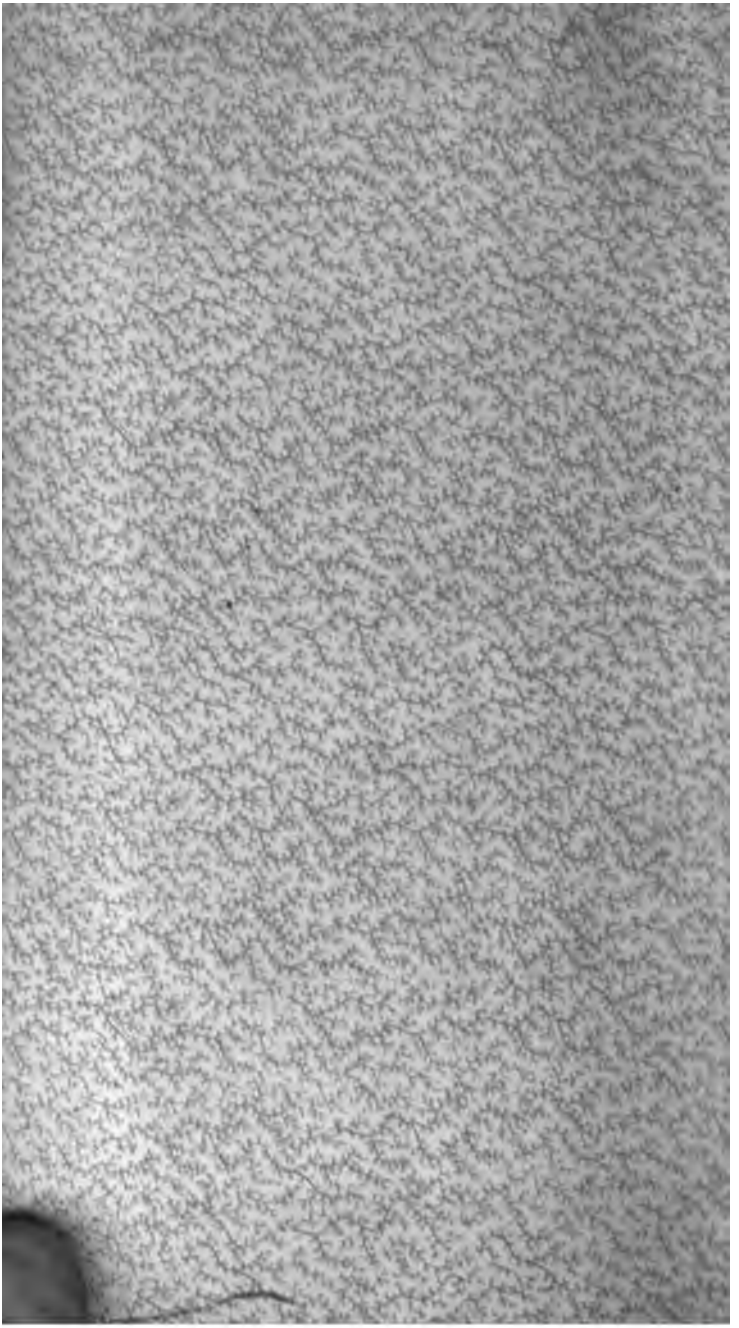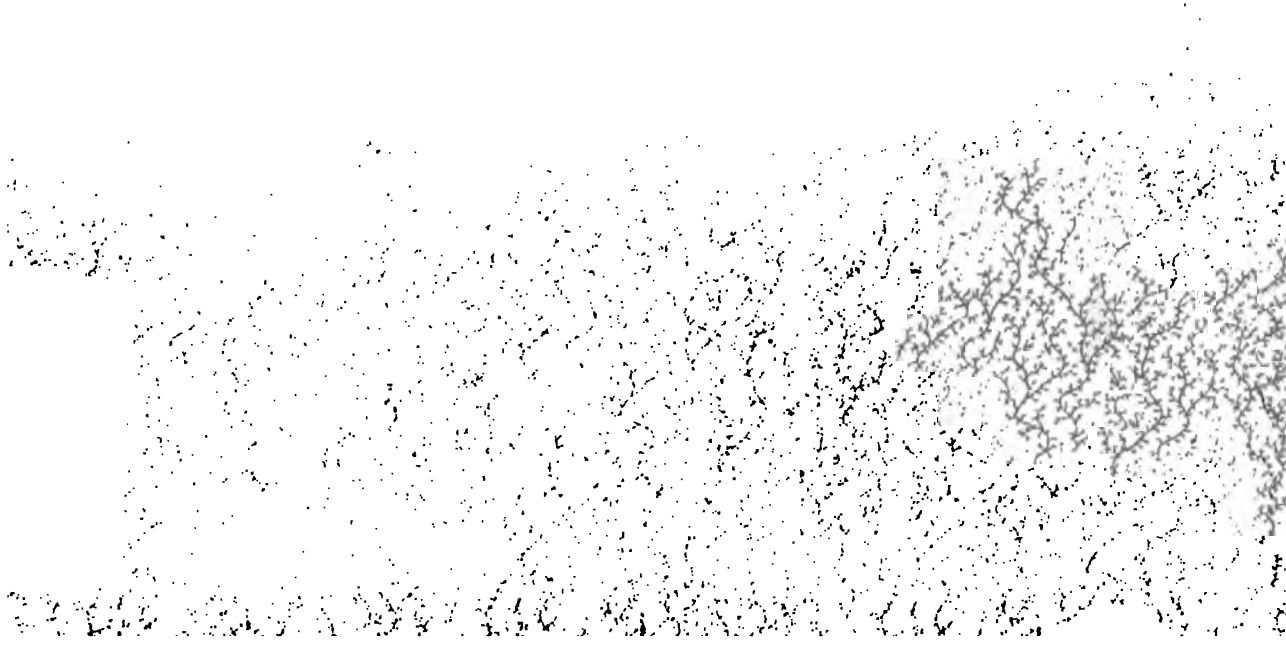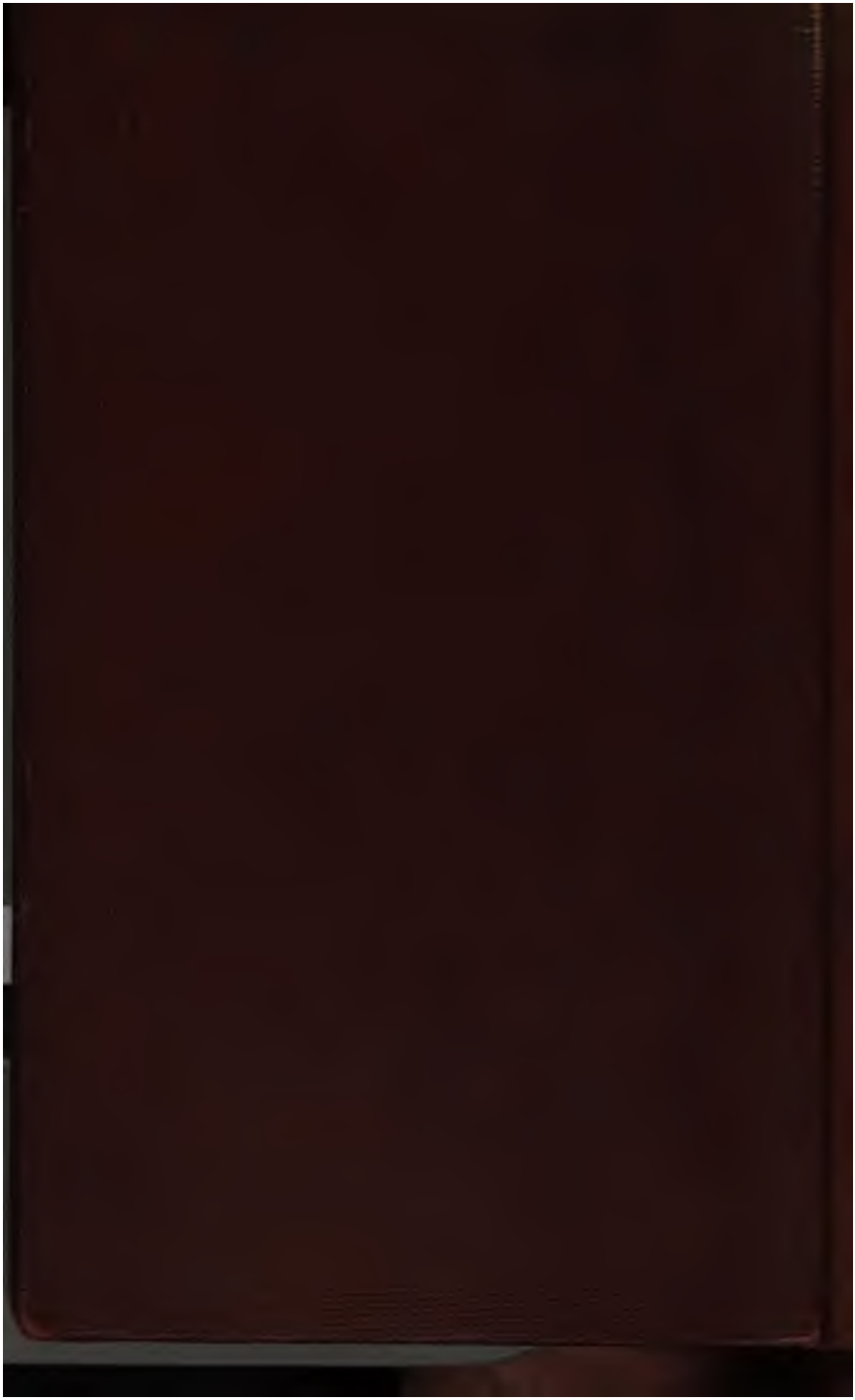
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